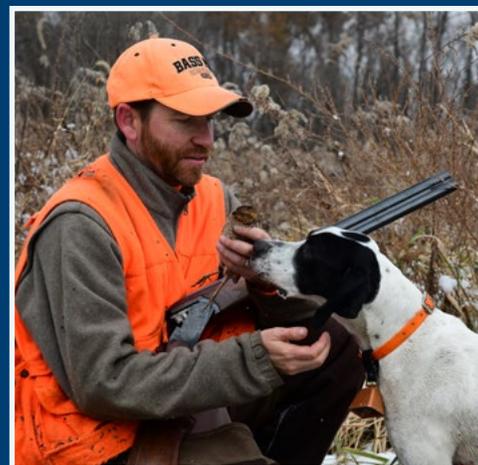


INDIANA

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

2026-2030



INDIANA

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

2026-2030

PREPARED BY

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December 2025

The preparation of this plan was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF) of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, as amended). The Indiana DNR Division of State Parks, Community Grants and Trails will have the authority to represent and act for the State of Indiana in dealing with the Secretary of the Interior for the purposes of the LWCF Act of 1965.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, NW

Washington, DC 20240

1.1.B(2225)

(via email)

December 29, 2025

The Honorable Mike Braun
Governor of Indiana
Office of the Governor
Statehouse, Second Floor
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Governor Braun:

We are pleased to report that we have reviewed and approved the 2026-2030 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan or SCORP for Indiana. We wish to commend the Indiana Department of Natural Resources staff for their efforts during the planning process and their achievement in producing a high-quality document.

The Indiana SCORP showcases a strong commitment to public engagement and fully aligns with the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act's requirements for outdoor recreation planning and engagement. With approval of this SCORP, Indiana's eligibility for the LWCF State Assistance Program is extended through 2031, paving the way for new opportunities to enhance outdoor recreation statewide.

We look forward to continuing our valuable partnership with the State in implementing the SCORP and in administering the LWCF financial assistance program.

Sincerely,

**STEPHAN
NOFIELD**

Digitally signed by STEPHAN
NOFIELD
Date: 2026.02.23 13:43:30
-05'00'

Stephan Nofield
Acting Associate Director, Partnerships and Civic Engagement
National Park Service

cc:

Alan Morrison, State Liaison Officer
Nathaniel Simmons, Alternate State Liaison Officer



STATE OF INDIANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State House, Second Floor
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Mike Braun
Governor

September 17, 2025

Stephan Nofield
Acting Associate Director, Partnerships and Civic Engagement
Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Nofield,

It has been five years since Indiana published our last Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). We have continued to use the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust and the Land and Water Conservation Fund as primary funding sources to conserve and develop public outdoor recreation lands at the state, county and local level throughout Indiana. The SCORP is an invaluable guide for this development.

This letter certifies that the citizens of Indiana were provided with ample opportunity for public participation in our latest SCORP planning process. As with our previous SCORPs, the 2026 plan uses a needs assessment based primarily on public input solicited from the citizens of Indiana, park professionals, and a 13-member Plan Advisory Committee. Through third-party surveys, we objectively gathered public input from citizens all over the state. At each stage, the Plan Advisory Committee offered reviews, feedback, and ideas crucial to our plan's development using their extensive knowledge and hands-on experience with the subject matter. We combined this specialized input with data from national recreation trends and the review of local park and recreation master plans to finalize the 2026 SCORP.

Our parks and outdoor recreation lands provide Hoosiers with the opportunity to experience nature and enjoy outdoor activities all across the state. The 2026 Indiana SCORP details statewide acquisition priorities for these public outdoor recreation lands from willing sellers for the next five years.

Sincerely,

Mike Braun

Governor of Indiana

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INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISIONS

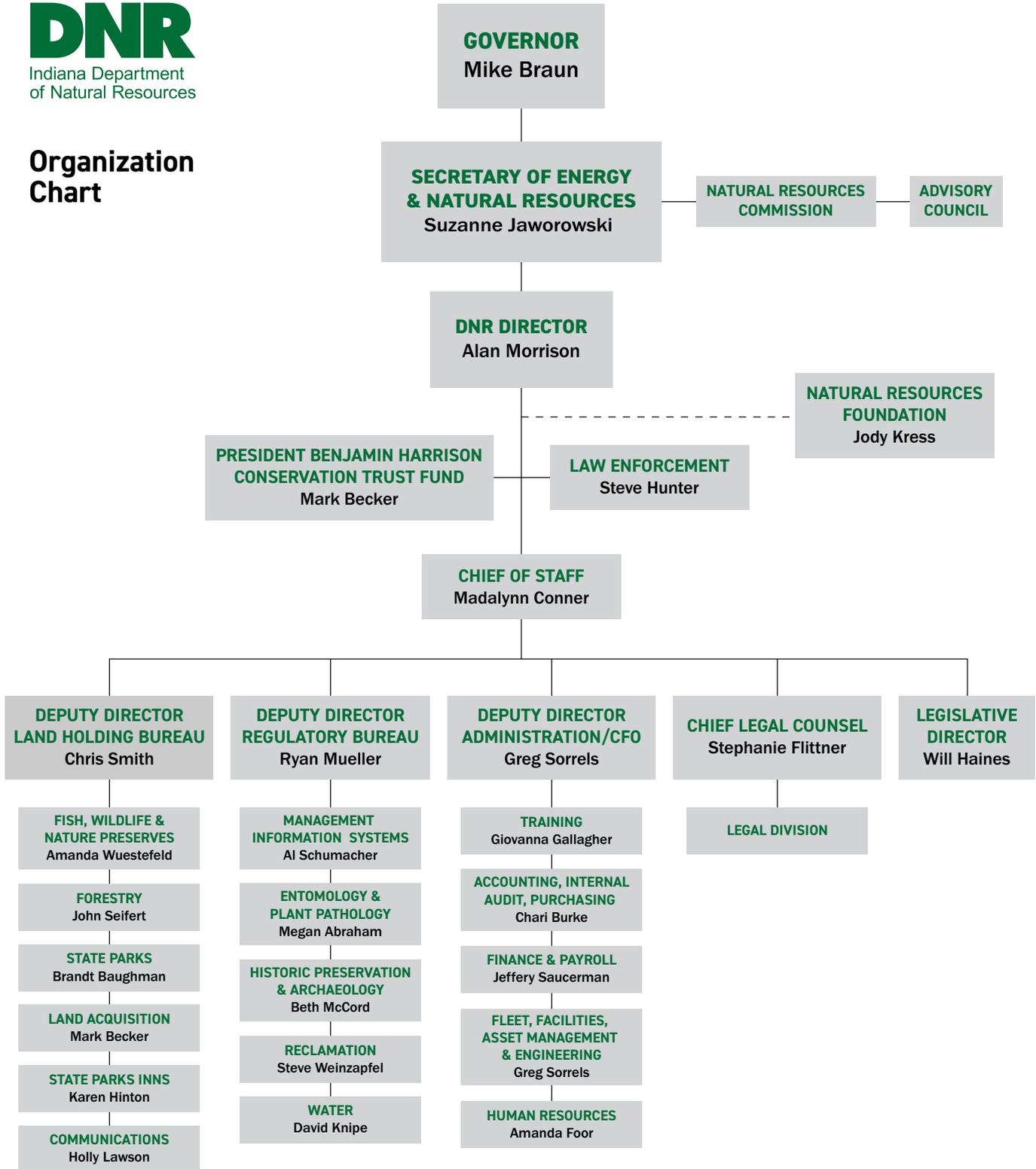
- **Accounting, Internal Audit, & Purchasing** supports DNR personnel, operations, and suppliers through the accountable, principled, and ethical application of best practices, rules, policies, and laws for the successful procurement and contracting of mission-driven goods and services, the efficient collection and processing of revenue, payments, and employee travel, and the responsible adherence to administrative procedures and internal controls.
- **Communications** provides internal and external communications, public relations, marketing, and public education for DNR.
- **Entomology & Plant Pathology** provides information and technical assistance in managing plant and insect pests, specializes in invasive and harmful species.
- **Finance & Payroll** manages funds received through the state budget and federal partners and oversees those budgets on an ongoing basis, providing guidance to DNR leadership. Administers the fiscal aspect of grants and cooperative agreements, ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations. Ensures that DNR employees receive their paychecks in a timely manner through the management of state processes.
- **Fleet, Facilities, Asset Management & Engineering** administers the department's facilities, including mail-room services, access control, safety and ADA compliance programs; fleet, including vehicle reservations, owned fleet inventory and maintenance, accident review board and Wright Express; and asset management, tracks all assets with a cost of more than \$500 and a useful life of one year or more. Provides engineering and technical support for all DNR properties and others, including architectural, sanitary, electrical, landscape, civil, and code enforcement.
- **Fish, Wildlife, & Nature Preserves** manages and monitors fish and wildlife populations, hunting and fishing licenses, and provides related technical assistance and information. Provides permanent protection to significant natural areas, maintaining sustainable examples of all native ecological communities in Indiana.
- **Forestry** manages State Forests and provides information and technical assistance to foresters and private landowners.
- **Land Acquisition** supports the acquisition of new properties from willing sellers via partnerships, donations, bequests and sales of the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Fund license plate.
- **Law Enforcement** provides 214 Indiana Conservation Officers in 10 law enforcement districts, handles environmental investigations, emergency response, education, law enforcement and property protection.
- **Legal** provides legal services, DNR-wide.
- **Historic Preservation & Archaeology** acts as staff for State Historic Preservation Officer and promotes conservation of cultural resources by facilitating Indiana and federal preservation programs.
- **Human Resources** serves as a resource for current and future employees of DNR, provides information on employment, benefits, volunteering, internships, applications and more.
- **Management Information Systems** provides technological service and support, DNR-wide.
- **Natural Resources Foundation** supports the charitable, educational and scientific programs, projects and policies of the DNR.
- **Reclamation** protects resources by overseeing reclamation of abandoned mines, active mines, mine blasting, mining permits, and public participation in oversight and permit processes, as well as the activities of the Oil & Gas program.
- **State Parks** manages and operates Indiana State Parks, state-managed lakes recreation, and provides education, recreation, resource conservation and management of these public lands. The State Parks Community Grants and Trails Section handles state- and local-level park & recreation master planning and streams & trails grants; and provides technical assistance for the public and for recreation professionals.
- **State Park Inns** manages the seven state park inns.
- **Training** oversees internal training programs.
- **Water** oversees above- and below-ground water, provides customer information services, permitting, technical services, and engineering services; operates three work groups: floodplain management, resource assessment, and the compliance & projects branch.

OTHER RELATED INDIANA GOVERNMENT OFFICES

- **Indiana Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation** provides guidance, education and technical assistance to public and private landowners throughout Indiana.
- **Indiana Department of Environmental Management** deals with Indiana's environmental quality and the sustainability of its air, water and land. Technical oversight, permits and regulatory compliance are part of its mission.
- **Indiana Department of Health** provides policy, guidance and facilitation of public health and health-care activities and programs statewide. The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health promotes sound physical fitness, nutrition and health.
- **Indiana Department of Transportation** works with all aspects of the statewide transportation system, including bus, car, rail, air, bicycle and foot.
- **Indiana Natural Resources Commission** comprises 12 bipartisan resident members who meet four times per year to address DNR issues.
- **Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs** provides planning, grants and technical assistance for rural economic development statewide.
- **Indiana Economic Development Corporation** is a public-private partnership with a 12-member board that acts as the top economic development agency for Indiana.
- **Indiana Destination Development Corporation** uses public and private funds to expand tourism destinations statewide.
- **State Museum & Historic Sites** operates a wide variety of historic/cultural programs and facilities, including the Indiana State Museum in Indianapolis, Gene Stratton-Porter Cabin, Historic New Harmony, and the Angel Mounds archeological site.



Organization Chart



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National Recreation and Parks Association

Accelerate Indiana Municipalities

Indiana Association of Regional Councils

US Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

STATEWIDE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

SCORP Vision Statement

The SCORP is an information resource that quantifies and analyzes the state’s outdoor recreation resources for the social, environmental, health, and economic benefit of citizens statewide. The SCORP is intended to support local, regional and state-level recreation decision making, as well as foster research, partnerships and cooperation among users, planners, government officials, nonprofits, and the private sector.

SCORP Goals

- Qualify Indiana for National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state-side grants.
- Set statewide priorities for funding of grants through LWCF, the Indiana Trails Program (ITP), and any other applicable funds available at State or federal levels.
- Provide a quantitative and qualitative analysis of outdoor recreation supply and demand statewide.
- Improve the provision of public outdoor recreation to all users.

SCORP Planning

The production of the Indiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) requires the expertise of people from many disciplines to assemble an effective tool for Indiana. Those who volunteer as members of the Plan Advisory Committee share input during the research and writing phases of the SCORP. They provide valuable insight and commentary that guides the development of surveys, research analysis, and creation of a plan that can be used by providers from all levels of community, including state, county, municipal and township.

The DNR thanks the committee members for their advice, support, expertise, time and talent. Committee members give direction to the SCORP 2026-2030 and ensure the priorities and contents are consistent with the State’s vision, mission and goals for public outdoor recreation and the DNR.

Plan Advisory Committee

Jerry Byanski	Park Planner, EarthPlan Associates
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LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897) was enacted “... to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring accessibility to all citizens of the United States of America of present and future generations and visitors who are lawfully present within the boundaries of the United States of America such quantity and quality of outdoor recreation resources as may be available and are necessary and desirable for individual active participation in such recreation and strengthen the health and vitality of the citizens of the United States by (1) providing funds for and authorizing federal assistance to the states in planning, acquisition, and development of needed land and water areas and facilities and (2) providing funds for the federal acquisition and development of certain lands and other areas.”

According to the National Park Service 2008 LWCF State Assistance Program Manual: “To be eligible for LWCF assistance for acquisition and development grants, each state shall prepare a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and update it at least once every five years.” In other words, a SCORP needs to look at outdoor recreation supply and demand; set priorities for current and future capital improvement, land acquisition, and development; and allow opportunities for citizens and local government officials to take part in the planning process.

The main objectives of the LCWF have remained the same for 61 years: land acquisition, preservation, provision, development, accessibility, and the strengthening of the health and vitality of our nation. This SCORP shows that Indiana’s focus is still directly in line with the LWCF Act of 1965.

Indiana has received more than \$140 million from the LWCF since the program’s start. Indiana’s smaller entities (e.g., counties, townships, municipalities) provide outdoor recreation opportunities to its citizens through the use of LWCF grants. Since 1965, more than 220 Indiana local governments and park and recreation boards have obtained grants. Some projects funded each year include land acquisition, some include trail development, and a few include the development of new aquatic features. Amenities that potentially are included in these projects include but are not limited to:

- Spray Pads
- Picnic Areas
- Natural Areas
- Playgrounds
- Ball Fields
- Dog Parks

LWCF requires a 50/50 match from communities that receive the grant. All funds for the project must be paid for by communities and then reimbursed upon successful project completion. As development, operating and maintenance costs increase, so does the importance of the LWCF in funding continued acquisition of land where needed. Unfortunately, these grants cannot fund every project in the state. Alternative funding methods will be discussed in this SCORP.

There are two other programs related to LWCF: the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP), and the Readiness and Recreation Initiative (RARI). Questions about these programs should be directed to DNR LWCF grant staff.



INTRODUCTION

A new SCORP offers the chance to track and analyze the many changes and new trends in Indiana and nationwide since the last SCORP. Consistent with recent research analysis, investments in outdoor recreation, trails, and local parks support workforce attraction, tourism growth, and small-community vitality. This SCORP emphasizes place-based public recreation improvements that yield economic, health, and environmental co-benefits statewide. The provision of parks and recreation in Indiana is often directly affected by these changes and trends. Some of these changes include changing demographics and socioeconomics; the continuing children and nature movement; the growing statewide obesity epidemic; and the increasing importance and economic benefits of Indiana travel, tourism and outdoor recreation, both statewide and to individual local communities.

Data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and similar sources yield the following socioeconomic changes in the state:

- **Hoosier Population Growth Increasing:** The 2024 U.S. Census estimates (American FactFinder – US Census, American Community Survey Annual Estimates, 07/2024), that the state has grown in population. The growth was from 6,790,497 US Census ACS estimated population in 2020, to 6,924,275 in 2024, a 1.97% increase. For the 2021 SCORP, Indiana had observed an estimated 1.44% population growth rate, from 2014 to 2018.
- **Even Older Hoosiers:** Indiana is still aging slightly. The state’s median age has risen from 37.7 in 2017, to 38.3, according to the 2020 Census. People continue to live longer, and medical care and access are improving.
- **The Baby Boomers Reach 60:** Baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) began turning 65 in 2011. In 2025, the youngest of the baby boomers reached 60 years of age.
- **Hoosiers Earning More:** Median household adjusted income in Indiana was \$54,181 in 2017, compared to \$69,477, according to 2023 Census estimates.
- **Fewer Hoosiers Living Under Same Roof:** Average Indiana household size has fallen to 2.00 (according to the 2023 Census estimates) down from 2.54 in 2018.
- **Unemployment Still Falling:** Indiana’s September 2024 statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.3%, down from the mid-COVID-19-pandemic April 2020 unemployment rate of 16.8%. By comparison, Indiana’s unemployment rate in March 2008 was 5.1%. Meaning that the state is below both prerecession and prepandemic unemployment levels. (IN Dept. of Workforce Dev.; 2008/2019/2024)
- **Transportation/Warehousing and Professional/Technical Employment Improving:** In the Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development 2024 Economic

Analysis Report (published in October 2024), the top three highest employment increases for the period of 2019 to 2023 were in Transportation/Warehousing, Professional/Technical Services, and Construction. The top three declining industries in that same period were in Mining, Information, and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation.

- **Poverty Slightly Decreasing in Indiana:** The percentage of Indiana families living below poverty level has declined from 13.3% in 2017, to 12.3% in 2023 according to Census estimates. For comparison purposes, in 2023, the Census estimated that the nationwide poverty rate was 11.1%.
- **Gasoline Costs Higher:** The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) on March 4, 2019, EIA reported that the U.S. average price per gallon was \$2.42/gallon. On June 30, 2025, the EIA reported the U.S. average price per gallon was \$3.16/gallon. (U.S. Energy Info Admin, 2019 & 2025).

RESEARCH STUDY FINDS THAT INVESTMENTS IN QUALITY OF LIFE AND PLACE BOOST GROWTH IN SMALL PLACES

A 2022 research study by three midwestern researchers (Weinstein, Et. Al., 2022) found that local government investments in quality of life and place increase growth in small and mid-sized midwestern communities. In 2022, the Brookings Institution (A Washington D.C. nonprofit research organization) published a commentary by the study's authors (Austin, Weinstein, Hicks & Wornell, 2022) summarizing the research. The commentary elaborated on the study's economic development data comparing investments in quality of life versus the traditional methods of doling out incentives to attract or retain employers or attempting to attract or support business with lower taxes and labor costs. According to the commentary: "... there is compelling new data that these traditional economic development tools may be ineffective compared to investments in quality of life and place. Our research on smaller communities has found that community amenities such as recreation opportunities, cultural activities, and excellent services (e.g., good schools, transportation options) are likely bigger contributors to healthy local economies than traditional "business-friendly" measures. Smaller places with a higher quality of life experience

both higher employment and population growth than similarly situated communities, including those that rank high by traditional economic competitiveness measures. The methodology of this new research uses the preferences of households and businesses themselves, rather than the external rankings of factors that make a community a nice place to live. Previous research (CBEC, 2016) shows people are willing to pay higher housing prices and even accept lower wages to live in towns they think offer a higher quality of life. Similarly, businesses are willing to pay higher real estate prices and offer higher wages to locate in places with more productive workers." "... After estimating quality of life (what makes a place attractive to households) and quality of business environment (what makes a place especially productive and attractive to businesses) in communities across the Midwest, we found quality of life matters more for population growth, employment growth, and lower poverty rates than quality of business environment." "... A shift in focus toward quality of life also favors regional cooperation rather than the zero-sum game of fiscal incentives. Places that focus narrowly on quality of business environment end up competing with their neighbors, reducing not only their own economic success but also the population and employment growth of their neighbors. Conversely, improving quality of life in a place improves the economic success not only of their own town, but also for nearby communities with the ability to enjoy the amenities their neighbors offer. The importance of quality of life in economic development has been growing in recent decades, as prospective residents increasingly demand such amenities. But the change has come so slowly that it has gone unnoticed by many. Even if the populations that move to quality of life Midwest communities are relatively small in number, these are small places to begin with, and newcomers can help reverse historic patterns of population decline." (Austin, Et. Al., 2022).

MORE BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR TIME FOR CHILDREN

In March of 2025, The University of Delaware's Cooperative Extension Program published an article written by Jenny Trufio that discussed the "5 Reasons Kids Need Outdoor Time." According to the article, "Outdoor time is crucial for kids' physical, mental, and

social development.” Here are just a few reasons why it’s important for kids to spend time outside:

“Physical Health

- Encourages exercise and movement, promoting strength, coordination, and cardiovascular health.
- Increases Vitamin D levels, which supports bone development and immune function.
- Reduces the risk of obesity by promoting active play.

Mental and Emotional Well-Being

- Lowers stress and anxiety by providing a natural, calming environment.
- Enhances mood and reduces symptoms of ADHD by improving focus and reducing hyperactivity.
- Encourages creativity and imagination through unstructured play.”

Cognitive and Academic Benefits

- Improves problem-solving and critical thinking skills through exploration and hands-on learning.
- Enhances concentration and attention span, leading to better academic performance.
- Stimulates curiosity and a love for nature, fostering environmental awareness.

Social Skills and Emotional Growth

- Promotes teamwork and cooperation through

group activities and games.

- Develops resilience and independence by allowing kids to take risks and solve challenges.
- Encourages communication skills by interacting with peers in a less structured setting.

Connection to Nature

- Fosters environmental responsibility and appreciation of the natural world.
- Provides a sense of wonder and exploration, making learning fun and engaging.”

Regular outdoor play is essential for a well-rounded childhood, supporting both immediate well-being and long-term development.”

INDIANA'S OBESITY EPIDEMIC IS STILL INCREASING

Indiana’s statewide obesity epidemic has increased since the 2020 SCORP. According to the 2023 U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), the world’s largest ongoing telephone public health survey, over one-third (38% up from 33.6% in 2017) of Hoosiers are obese (i.e., have a body mass index of 30 or greater). This ranks Indiana as having the eighth highest adult obesity rate in the nation. Health care expenses from Indiana’s obesity epidemic are estimated at \$9.3



billion annually, according to the 2023 GlobalData study: “Obesity’s Impact on Indiana’s Economy and Labor Force.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/risk-factors/risk-factors.html> On the CDC’s “Risk Factors for Obesity” page, there is a discussion of obesity risk factors related to systems and the environment we live in: “Health is influenced by the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play. Health can also be influenced by forces and policies that shape these conditions. These factors affect a person’s ability to make healthy choices and influence their risk of gaining excess weight and developing obesity.

Examples include:

- Access to healthy, affordable foods and beverages.
- Access to safe places for physical activity.
- Community design to support activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations.
- Supportive childcare and school environments.
- Access to high-quality health care services.
- Safe housing and transportation.
- Economic stability.”

Another benchmark in measuring Indiana’s overall health is a yearly report by the United Health Foundation: “America’s Health Rankings: 2024 Annual Report.” The report is the longest-running (35 years) annual assessment of the nation’s health on a state-by-state basis. The report provides yearly data to serve as a benchmark for states and to spark data-driven discussions on opportunities to promote the health and well-being of our country. Eighty-eight measures that span five categories of health are evaluated this year (2024). The 2018 data from this report ranked Indiana as the 41st healthiest state in the country; fortunately, in 2024, Indiana improved five places to 36th healthiest. Indiana’s worst areas driving the bottom third ranking were health outcomes, behaviors, social and economic factors, and clinical care.

INDIANA’S ECONOMY PREDICTED TO REMAIN STABLE

According to the article: “Indiana’s Outlook for 2025” by Carol O. Rogers (Indiana Business Research Center at IU’s Kelley School of Business), written in Winter 2024, for the Indiana Business Review, Volume

99, No. 5, published online at: <https://www.ibrc.indiana.edu/ibr/2024/outlook/indiana.html> : “...national measures are likely to result in a job-creation slowdown for Indiana, but at the same time, Indiana personal income growth should hold its own. Looking through 2025 and beyond, both employment and income show acceptable growth, although both will remain slightly below the national rate. Indiana has seen strong growth in the number of jobs since the pandemic, not only recouping what was lost in 2020, but surpassing pre-pandemic levels. ...When we look at Indiana industry sectors, three things stand out ... First, the post-pandemic restart process is now close to complete. Second, job creation during the next three years (2024-2026) shifts to the services sector and away from manufacturing. And third, construction growth was strong before, during and after the pandemic. Our model shows that total employment will continue to grow in Indiana, but will begin to slow next year and into 2026. Our current outlook for Indiana is fair-to-middling, as we forecast a slowdown in overall employment growth similar to pre-2020 levels. At the same time, Indiana personal income growth will slow during the middle half of our forecast and then stabilize.”

INDIANA TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION IS A GROWING COMPONENT OF INDIANA’S ECONOMY

Indiana’s economy is seeing even larger benefits from tourism. According to a 2023 Rockport Analytics study commissioned by the Indiana Destination Development Corporation, it was another excellent year, with 81.7 million visitors spending nearly \$16.2 billion on lodging, food, entertainment, shopping and transportation across Indiana. According to the study: “Indiana’s tourism industry achieved remarkable growth in 2023, cementing its role as a significant driver of economic vitality and job creation. Visitor spending surged by 7.0%, reaching \$16.2 billion, which contributed \$10.4 billion to Indiana’s Gross State Product (GSP). This represents 2.1% of the state’s economy, with tourism remaining one of Indiana’s top 15 employers. Visitor activity supported more than 208,500 jobs, surpassing pre-pandemic levels and reflecting a 4% increase from 2022. Wages for tourism-related roles climbed to \$4 billion, while indirect and induced employment contributed



an additional \$2.4 billion in wages. For every dollar spent by visitors, 65 cents stayed in the state, further bolstering local businesses and communities. Visitor volume grew modestly, by 1.2% to 81.7 million stays, remaining just below the 2019 peak of 82.7 million. Notably, international travel led growth with a 26% increase, and business travel also saw gains of 2.3%. Spending growth was more robust, fueled by a higher average spend-per-trip. Day trips drove the largest increases in travel volume, surpassing pre-pandemic levels, while leisure travel grew by nearly 1%, and overnight stays edged closer to full recovery. Indiana's tourism sector also delivered significant benefits to federal, state and local governments, generating \$3 billion in tax revenue. This included \$1.1 billion in state taxes and \$694 million in local taxes, which alleviated tax burdens on residents by approximately \$583 per household. The revenues supported public services such as education and is enough to pay for 120,000 students or the salaries of more than 29,000 teachers, highlighting the state tourism industry's broader impact. Indiana outpaced nation-

al recovery trends in key metrics, including domestic visitor spending and tourism GDP. However, challenges remain, such as narrowing the gap in international visitor spending and regaining the state's pre-pandemic ranking as the 12th largest tourism employer. Looking ahead, continued investment in tourism and its component industries will be vital to sustaining growth and ensuring Indiana remains a compelling destination for both domestic and international travelers."

Park professionals across Indiana still share anecdotal park-use evidence in local parks and recreation master plans reviewed by the DNR still indicate that local and regional park use is rising, keeping pace with the gradual post-pandemic improvement of the economy. There is support for this perception from the national level from a 2025 study by the Outdoor Industry Association: the "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends Report." According to the report, "In 2024, the outdoor recreation participant base grew 3% to a record 181.1 million participants, or 58.6% of all Americans age 6 and older. There were

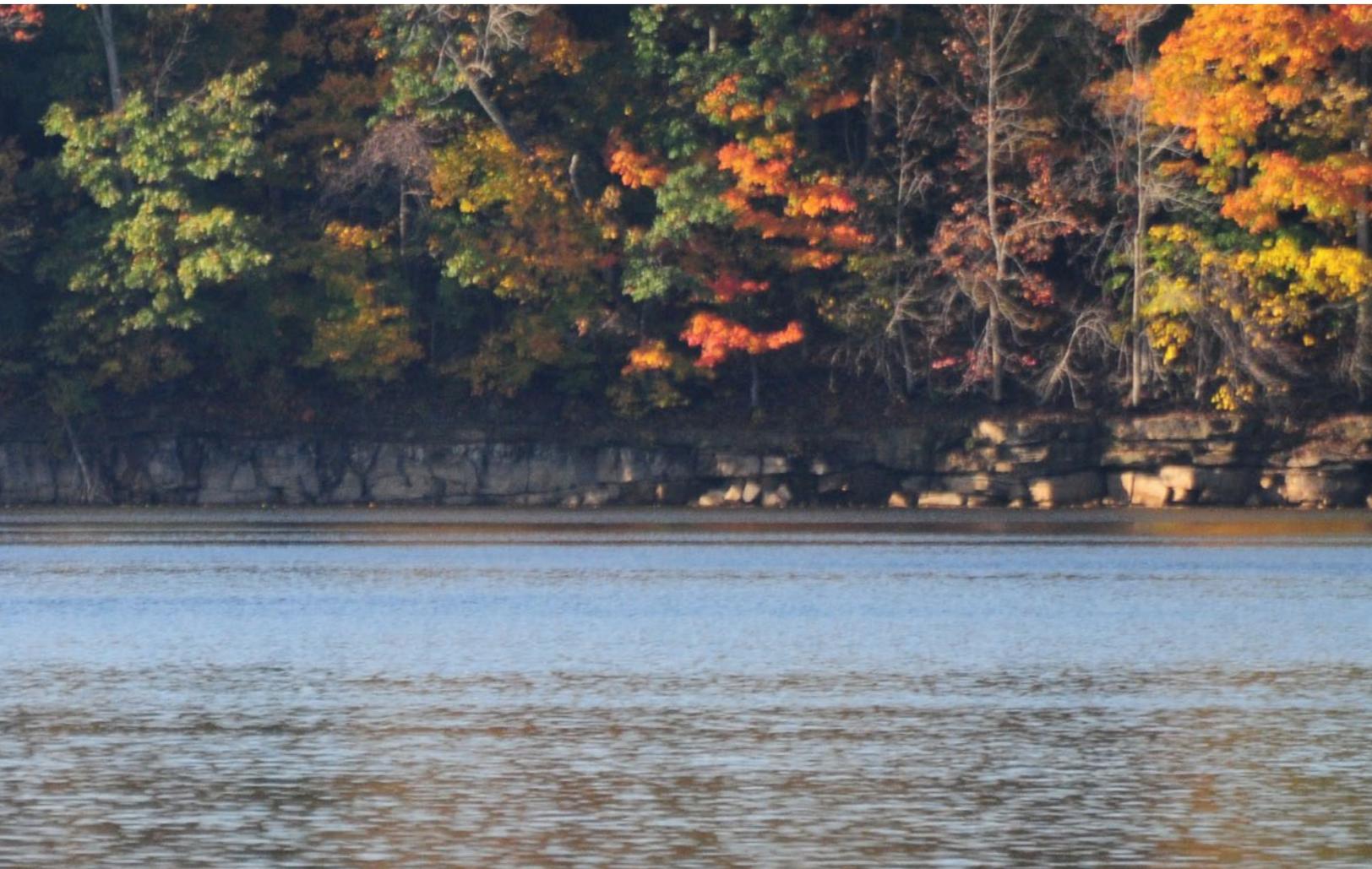


significant increases in the number of youth and seniors, participants with more than \$100K in annual income, participants in the South, participants with a high school diploma and no college education, and Black and Hispanic participants. Additionally, the number of “core” – or most frequent participants increased by 5.7% (five million participants). Participants are most attracted to walking, hiking, fishing, camping, bicycling, and running outdoors, and each of those major activities gained an average of 2.1 million participants. Nearly every signal in the 2024 participation data is positive for prolonged growth. Despite weakening economic conditions, the prospect of growth in the number of Americans who participate in outdoor recreation is very strong.” “...The relatively low growth in the number of outings compared to the growth in the number of participants demonstrates the transition to a more “casual” (less frequent participation) participant base overall.” “...The number of White participants fell 1.1% in 2024 to 121.1 million, which is 1.3 million fewer participants than 2023. Additionally, there were 382,000

fewer Asian/Pacific Islanders participating in 2024. Households with children have a 66% participation rate in outdoor activities, which was a record high in 2024. Overall, the bulk of the growth came from outside of the white, middle-aged, bachelor’s degree-carrying cohort.”

This study agrees with the DNR’s longitudinal research in the past five SCORPs, each of which shows outdoor pedestrian use (including day hiking) as the most popular outdoor recreation activity among Indiana residents.

Even considering the significant economic impact of Indiana’s public parks and recreation and the still-growing use of the state’s recreation lands, it is still prudent to ask if investing in public outdoor recreation space has any tangible benefit for state governments. Many people agree that having quality parks and recreation sites and facilities improves the quality of life in a community, but does it really affect a state’s fiscal health? In 2023, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) worked with the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason Uni-



versity to create a fifth iteration of an earlier study on the “The Economic Impact of Parks: An Examination of the Fiscal Effects of Operations and Capital Spending by Local Park and Recreation Agencies on the United States Economy.” The study analyzed detailed economic data from the U.S. Census Bureau to look at these economic impacts at the national and state levels. According to the study, “Local public park and recreation agencies in the United States generated more than \$201 billion in economic activity and supported almost 1.1 million jobs that boosted labor income by more than \$63 billion from their operations and capital spending in 2021.” The study also went on to examine the economic effects at the state level: “This study also examined the economic impact of local park and recreation agencies; spending in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The methodology used in the state-level analysis mirrored that for the national study. The estimates of total economic impacts include the direct, indirect, and induced effects of operations and capital spending by local park and recreation agencies in each state and the District of Columbia.” In Indiana, local parks and recreation created 9,422 jobs in 2021; \$318,649,774 in salaries, wages and benefits was also generated due to local government parks and recreation; and \$543,058,517 in additional statewide Gross Domestic Product came from local parks and recreation providers in 2021. Local parks and recreation agency transactions generated \$1,269,172,310 in economic activity in Indiana in 2021, ranking the state 27th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia.

DNR has created this SCORP as a way to share research and other information with state residents, park professionals, park board members, urban planners, government officials and many more. DNR has a strong tradition of blending public opinion and input from parks-and-recreation professionals in the field to understand current and future recreational needs and preferences statewide. The next section of this chapter contains the priorities that emerged from the collected data and analysis from this SCORP.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PRIORITIES FOR PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATION PROVIDERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Based on the data contained in this SCORP, these goals and objectives are recommended, in random

order, to guide decision-making in parks-and-recreation and natural resources management for the next five years.

1. Develop more trails and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
 - a. Whenever possible, acquire rights-of-way, easements and railroad corridors for future trail development from willing sellers, rail-banking, donors or partners.
 - b. Integrate bike/pedestrian facilities of all types into long-term planning of community infrastructure design and construction whenever possible.
 - c. Emphasize trails and bike/pedestrian facilities as means to connect and improve existing and future outdoor recreation facilities, as well as tie into community infrastructure.
 - d. Encourage development of trail facilities of all kinds for bike/pedestrian use: urban, rural, long-distance, connector, commuter, recreational, exercise/wellness, etc.
 - e. Require trail development using accessible, sustainable design and surfacing wherever possible.
2. Continue emphasizing Indiana’s aquatic resources, both natural and human-made.
 - a. Preserve and protect rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands and riparian corridors when and wherever possible through acquisition, education, funding, restoration and development of new areas to enhance both swimming and boating opportunities.
 - b. Encourage actions that improve the quality of Indiana’s waters as well as user access to all types of aquatic recreation resources.
 - c. Whenever possible, provide or enhance access to natural and human-made aquatic resources, such as splash pads, pools, water features, wetlands, ponds, lakes, access/launch sites, etc.
3. Protect and enhance Indiana’s natural and outdoor recreation resources.
 - a. Use the 2026 SCORP Participation Study’s top five favorite outdoor recreation activities when considering parks and recreation user preferences: hiking/walking/running; camp-

- ing; boating/canoeing/kayaking; swimming/water activities; and fishing.
- b. Protect Indiana's natural heritage by identifying and preserving significant natural areas, including wildlife/fish habitats for endangered, rare, threatened or species of special concern.
 - c. Protect Indiana's outdoor recreation potential by identifying and preserving areas with existing or potential outdoor recreation opportunities or access.
 - d. Provide for education of the citizens of Indiana in environmental stewardship and wise use of Indiana's natural resources.
 - e. Consider the improvements possible in water and air quality, brownfield remediation, tourism and commerce, and economic development created by enhancing outdoor recreation.
4. Encourage and promote outdoor recreation participation.
 - a. Use outdoor recreation as a tool to fight the continuing obesity epidemic by offering locations to participate in as many kinds of healthy exercise as possible and facilitating lifestyle change that encourages lifelong healthy living.
 - b. Encourage continued development of new outdoor recreation facilities, especially in areas of expanding population growth, high user demand, or significant gaps in service provision.
 - c. Encourage development of more neighborhood-level outdoor recreation facilities that meet local needs close to home, preferably within walking or biking distance of residential areas, libraries, schools, retail areas, medical facilities, etc.
 - d. Provide outdoor recreation opportunities for all user demographics, including all ages, abilities and skill levels.
 - e. Consider options for using special events, fairs, festivals, and concerts to attract users to your parks and facilities.
 5. Provide funding for outdoor recreation development at the state and local levels.
 - a. Explore alternative funding methods such as public/private partnerships, recreation impact fees (RIF), cooperative agreements, cost sharing, corporate sponsorships, etc.
 - b. Continue to administer state-level grant programs such as Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants, Indiana Trails Program (ITP) grants, Wabash River Heritage Corridor Fund grants, and Indiana Shooting Range grants.
 - c. Emphasize parks and recreation facilities that are cost-efficient and financially self-supporting while promoting financially affordable access to the greatest number of users possible.
 - d. Consider the benefits of parks and recreation toward community economic development, tourism, job growth, urban and rural revitalization, reduction of health care costs and improving quality of life.
 - e. Use existing financial resources as efficiently and effectively as possible; consider strategies such as detailed cost-benefit analysis for choosing public provision or privatization of services, maintenance or construction, multi-agency bulk purchases, interagency work-sharing agreements, volunteers and "friends" groups, and other means to control the costs of operations and maintenance.
 - f. Use energy-efficient, cost-saving sustainable designs, materials and energy sources in facility development, such as LED lights, motion-sensing light switches, and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building certifications/very energy-efficient designs.



CHAPTER 1

The Surveys

The introductory chapter of this SCORP examined some of the changes Indiana has undergone since publication of the 2021-2025 SCORP and looked briefly at some of the state and national trends that affect how we use and provide outdoor recreation in Indiana. This chapter looks at the backbone of this SCORP: the surveys administered by third-party surveyors, the methods used, and the results.

There's a difference between Indiana's SCORPs and those created by other states. How is the Indiana SCORP different?

1. We actually try to directly "count" (via local government self-reported data) the supply of public outdoor recreation acreage, both by county and by level of government.
2. We hire objective, unbiased, professional third-party surveyors to do our surveys.
3. We ask members of the public what preferences they have for outdoor recreation activities, as well as gather opinions and ideas from professional outdoor recreation providers.

What do these differences mean for this SCORP? This SCORP looks at what public outdoor recreation acreage actually exists, both geographically and by cumulative "type" of acreage, so that readers can cross-compare themselves against their peers in multiple ways. The way we survey both the public and out-

door recreation professionals allows the Indiana DNR to look at what real people actually want to do, as well as how real recreation professionals provide those activities. We also look at the needs and challenges faced by both groups. The Indiana SCORP has always been a multi-purpose informational touchstone—for researchers looking for data on recreation preferences, for park professionals writing park plans or strategic documents, for local government leaders seeking to compare their community against local and regional competition, and even for interested members of the public who want to know what activities their friends and neighbors enjoy doing while visiting public outdoor recreation sites.

Once again, this SCORP was created using three main surveys:

- The Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey
 - Asks the public about their outdoor recreation activities and frequency of use
- The Local Parks and Recreation Provider Survey
 - Asks professional and nonprofit local outdoor recreation providers about their challenges, issues, and solutions
- The Trail User Survey
 - Asks the public about how they use one of our most popular amenities

THE OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION SURVEY

Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey methods:

- The survey took place from February 2022 through December 2023.
- The completed respondent database consists of 6,203 valid respondents.
- The survey used a paper intercept questionnaire.
- The questionnaire contained 18 regular questions and one large, multipart question containing 28 separate recreational activity categories.
- The estimated time needed to take the survey was eight to 10 minutes.
- Paper survey results were manually entered into the database post-survey.
- Respondents were chosen on a next-available basis.
- People younger than age 17 were not discouraged from taking the survey, but were not actively recruited.
- The survey was conducted at county fairs, libraries, and other public locations throughout the state.

Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey demographic results:

- Respondents were 52.9% female, 47.1% male.
- The average age of respondents was 42.5 years.
- Every county in Indiana was represented in the data.
- 60.4% of survey respondents were married, 20.0% were single (never married), and 7.7% were single (divorced).
- 75.9% of respondents reported themselves as White, 12.7% as Black, 7.1% as Hispanic/Latino, and 1.6% as multi-racial. [Results all somewhat comparable to current U.S. Census estimated demographic data for Indiana]
- 71.9% of respondents stated that they had between two and four family members living in their household.
- 54.86% of respondents reported having no persons younger than age 18 living in their household.



Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey results:

NOTE: In the last several SCORP Participation surveys, by public request, DNR reported Mountain Biking separately from all other reported bicycle-related activities. This time there was no significant difference in adding or subtracting Mountain Biking from the main Bicycling data: neither change made any difference to Bicycling's place in the data, so this SCORP will only report the Bicycling data with Mountain Biking separately (in 46th place).

- The top three reasons why respondents participate in outdoor recreation were:
 1. To be with family and friends . . . 44%
 2. Mental health 39.5%
 3. Physical health 37%
 (Multiple answers were allowed for this question.)

For four previous SCORP cycles, Indiana SCORPs have explored public outdoor recreation user's participation and preferences in several ways, including by asking survey participant outdoor recreation users what their "favorite" public outdoor recreation activities are, as well as what activities they actually do (and how often). Keep in mind that a user's "favorite" outdoor recreation activity isn't always something that they can actually do very often, and what they do most often isn't always their favorite activity. For this reason, the SCORP participation survey looks at this data both ways.

- The top 10 "favorite" outdoor recreation activities described by respondents were:
 1. Walking, Running, Jogging
 2. Camping/RV Camping
 3. Boating, Wakeboarding, Sailing, Tubing, Jet Skiing, Water Skiing
 4. Swimming, Snorkeling, Diving, Scuba, Splash Pad
 5. Fishing
 6. Golf
 7. Bicycling (All) (adding or removing Mountain Biking made no change)
 8. Gardening, Landscaping, Yard Work
 9. Fairs, Festivals, Concerts
 10. Parks and Playgrounds

- The No. 1 "favorite" outdoor recreation activity, "Walking, Running, Jogging," was more than 10 times more popular than the No. 10 activity, "Parks and Playgrounds", and almost twice as popular as the No. 2 "favorite" activity, "Camping/RV Camping".
- The top 10 outdoor recreation activities respondents did more than **once per week** were:
 1. Walking, Running, Jogging
 2. Gardening, Landscaping, Yard Work
 3. Relaxation/Spiritual Renewal
 4. Bird/Wildlife Watching
 5. Outdoor Pool Swimming
 6. Bicycle Touring (Road, Touring, Casual, etc.)
 7. Attending Outdoor Spectator Sports (Baseball, Football, etc.)
 8. Health Related Activities (Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, etc.)
 9. Playground use
 10. Family/Friends/Group Outdoor Gatherings/Reunions
- The top 10 outdoor recreation activities respondents did only **once per month** were:
 1. Visiting Parks, Wilderness, or Primitive Areas
 2. Family/Friends/Group Outdoor Gatherings/Reunions
 3. Attending Outdoor Fairs/Festivals
 4. Picnicking
 5. Attending Outdoor Concerts, Plays, etc.
 6. Visiting Farms, Wineries, Agricultural Venues, etc.
 7. Attending Outdoor Spectator Sports (Baseball, Football, etc.)
 8. Visiting Historic Sites, Interpretive Centers
 9. Camping (all types)
 10. Playground Use
- The top 10 outdoor recreation activities respondents did only **once per year** were:
 1. Fall Foliage Viewing
 2. Winter Sports (All Skiing, Snowboarding, Sledging, etc.)
 3. Visiting Historic Sites, Interpretive Centers
 4. Camping (all types)
 5. Canoeing/Kayaking/Rowing (Boat) Water Paddle Sports
 6. Attending Outdoor Concerts, Plays, etc.
 7. Visiting Farms, Wineries, Agricultural Venues, etc.

8. Picnicking
 9. Horseback Riding (all types)
 10. Family/Friends/Group Outdoor Gatherings/ Reunions
- The top methods of travel used to reach the outdoor recreation activity they participated in the most were:
 1. Car/Truck 67.6%
 2. Walk/Jog/Run . . 24.9%
 3. Bike 5.8%
 4. Other 5.5%
 5. Motorcycle 2.5%
 6. Horseback 1.4%
 (Multiple answers were allowed for this question.)
 - Asked in which county in Indiana they most often participated in outdoor recreation activities, the respondents most commonly cited the counties with the highest population. This may indicate that people recreate outdoors most often close to where they live.
 - Asked how much money they were willing to spend per year on their favorite outdoor recreation activity (including cost of equipment, training, travel, etc.), respondents said:
 1. Less than \$100. 21.7%
 2. \$101-\$250 19.2%
 3. \$251-\$500 17.3%
 4. \$501-\$750 9.7%
 5. \$751-\$1,000. 7.7%
 6. Over \$1,001 24.4%
 - The reported average spending per year for their “favorite” outdoor recreation activity was: \$1,111.
 - Asked what primary sources for funding the *development of new* outdoor recreation facilities (after first pursuing all federal funds, grants, and donations), respondents preferred:
 1. State general taxes 34.5%
 2. Facility Use Fee 18.4%
 3. Local taxes. 16.6%
 4. Land development fees/requirements 11.5%
 5. State tax on recreation equipment . . . 10.4%
 6. None. 9.9%
 7. Other 7.1%
 8. Local bond issue 4.3%
 (Multiple answers were allowed for this question.)
 - Asked what primary sources for funding the *operations/maintenance of existing* outdoor recreation facilities (after first pursuing all federal funds, grants, and donations), respondents preferred:
 1. State general taxes 28.8%
 2. Facility Use Fee 27.5%
 3. Local taxes. 17.0%
 4. State tax on recreation equipment . . . 12.1%
 5. None. 10.6%
 6. Other 8.2%
 (Multiple answers were allowed for this question.)
 - Asked how far they were willing to travel one way to participate in their favorite outdoor recreation activity, respondents said:
 1. 0-5 miles 6.8%
 2. 6-10 miles 6.1%
 3. 11-15 miles 5.5%
 4. 16-25 miles 9.8%
 5. 26-35 miles 6.9%
 6. 36-50 miles 16.4%
 7. 51-75 miles 12.4%
 8. 76-100 miles. 9.7%
 9. More than 100 miles 26.4%
 - The main reason given why respondents **did not** participate in outdoor recreation activities more often was:
 1. None, I participate as much as I want to. 47.2%
 2. Personal barriers, no time, no motivation, lack of skills, physical, mental or emotional health, etc. 25.6%
 3. Cost barriers, lack of money/economic factors 8.8%
 4. Social barriers, no one to participate with, family conflict, responsibilities to others, etc. .8.1%
 5. No recreation facilities close to my home . 7.5%
 6. Structural barriers, poor setting/physical environment, lack of facilities or programs, transportation, safety, etc. 4.5%
 7. Disability-related access prevents me from participating as much as I would like . . . 4.3%
 8. Customs, cultural barriers, etc. 0.9%
 (Multiple answers were allowed for this question.)
 - Asked if they or any of their immediate family have any type of physical or intellectual disability that prevents them from participating in outdoor recreation activities, 16.1% said yes, and 83.9% said no (comparable to current U.S. Census statistical estimates on the percentage of Indiana residents with a disability).
 - Respondents who answered “yes” to the previous question reported having the following type(s) of

disability:

- 1. Walking 58.5%
- 2. Lifting 25.3%
- 3. Bending 28.1%
- 4. Other 22.6%
- 5. Breathing 24.3%
- 6. Hearing 11.8%
- 7. Seeing 7.9%

(Multiple answers were allowed for this question.)

THE LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION PROVIDER STUDY

Local Park and Recreation Provider Study methods:

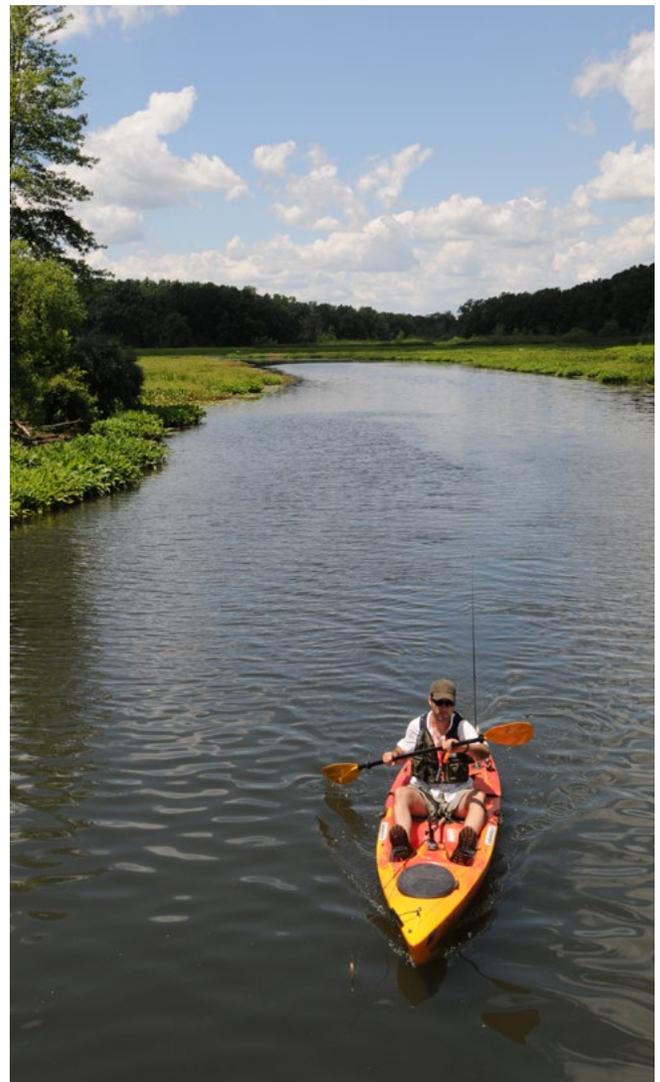
- Individual survey respondents were invited via email, from a DNR statewide list of over 850 public parks and recreation providers.
- After an initial email invitation, reminder emails were sent to nonrespondents at one-week to 10-day intervals.
- Potential respondents from the initial list were also emailed an invitation to participate in the survey from the SCORP planning staff at DNR.
- The survey used an online survey with a ZIP code question to group responses by region.
- The main questionnaire was approximately 29 questions long, followed by an optional set demographic questions.
- The estimated time needed to take the online survey was 20 minutes.
- Survey results were entered into a survey database and tabulated.
- The survey took place from October 2022 through March 2023.
- The completed database consists of 153 respondents representing the entire state.

Which units of government provide park and/or recreation in your community?

- 88% reported that their community had municipal-provided park and recreation facilities.
- 37% reported that their community had county-provided park and recreation facilities.
- 20% reported that their community had township-provided park and recreation facilities.
- 9% reported that their community had “other” organizations or groups that provided park and recreation facilities.

Respondents Roles Among Local Park and Recreation Departments:

- 33% are employees of municipal park departments.
- 16% are employees of “other” units of local government. (e.g., Council, Street, Public Works).
- 16% are municipal park board members.
- 12% are volunteers or members of an organization related to parks, recreation, and/or trails.
- 11% are employees of county parks departments.
- 9% are “Friends of” or similar nonprofit/nongovernmental management group members.
- 7% are trail organization board members.
- 6% report none of the options apply.
- 4% are county park board members.
- 4% are township park board members.
- 1% are employees of township park departments.
- 1% are employees of trail organizations.



NOTE: Respondents could choose one or more responses to these questions, if applicable.

Table 1.1 **Number of Years Served in Current Position**

Years served in Current Position	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
0-5	53	34.6%
6-10	30	19.6%
11-15	13	8.5%
16-20	11	7.2%
More than 20	15	9.8%
Total	122	79.7%

NOTE: 31 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table, which is 20.3%.

Table 1.2 **Total Number of Years Served in Parks and Recreation**

Total Years Served	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
0-5	38	24.2%
6-10	16	10.5%
11-15	15	9.8%
16-20	12	7.8%
More than 20	39	26.1%
Total	120	78.4%

NOTE: 33 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table, which represents about 21.6% of respondents. Respondents reported the average total years served in parks and recreation was 31.8 years, the median was 12.0, and the mode (most reported number) was 10 years.

Table 1.3 **Reported Gender of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Woman	48	31%
Man	47	31%
Transgender	1	1%
Prefer not to answer	1	1%
Total	97	63%

NOTE: 56 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

Table 1.4 **Reported Age of Respondents**

Age	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
20 - 40	18	12%
41 - 60	47	31%
61 - 80	30	20%
Total	95	62%

NOTE: 58 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table. The youngest was 22 and oldest was 79. The mean age was 53.6 years.

Communities Served By the Respondents

The following tables are based on open ended survey questions, so the groupings of responses below may not follow a set or even scale but are simply gathered into ranges based on the responses.



Table 1.5 Users Served as Reported by Respondents

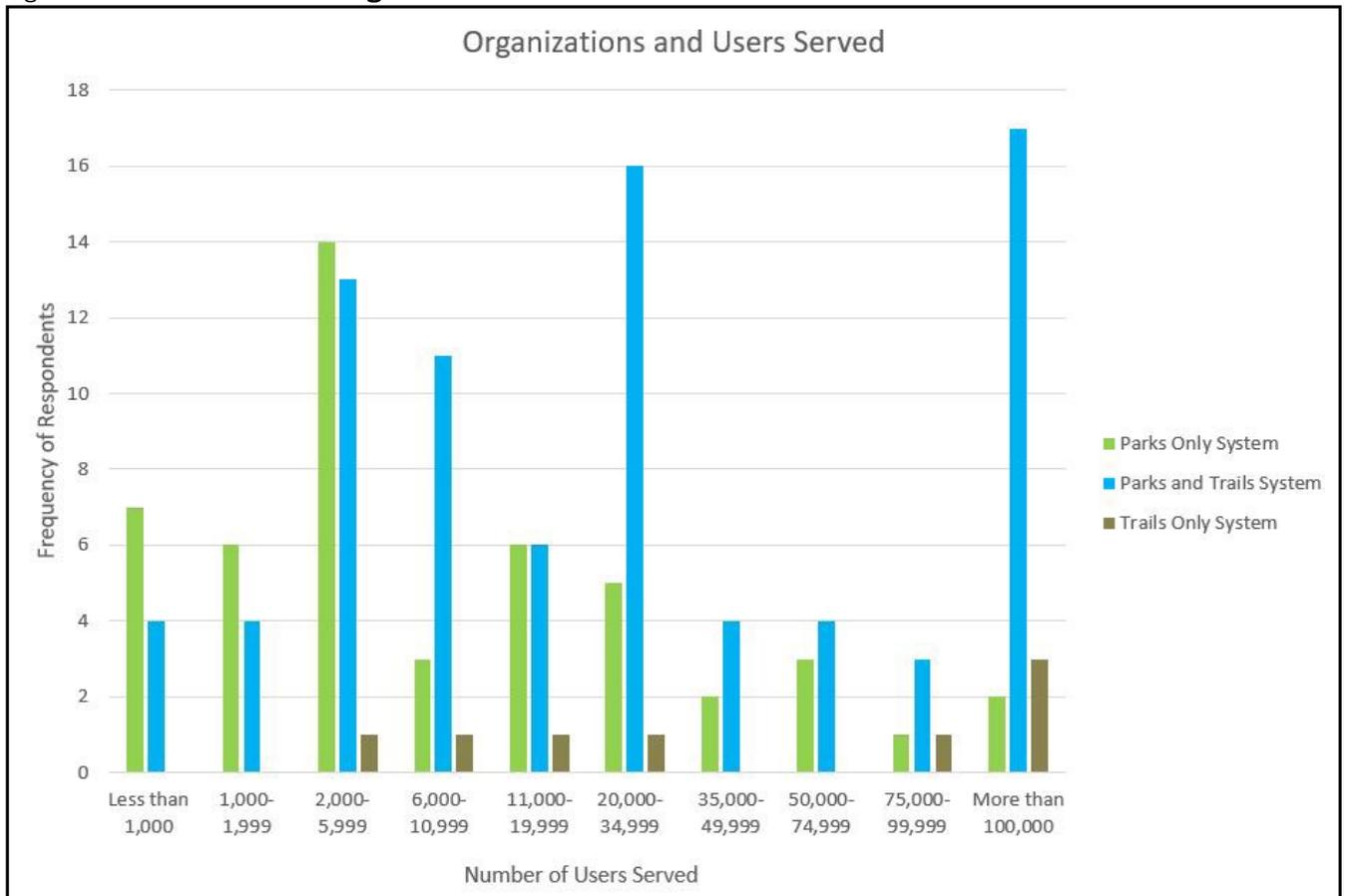
Number of Users Served Annually	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Less than 1,000	12	8%
1,000 - 1,999	10	7%
2,000 - 5,999	28	18%
6,000 - 10,999	15	10%
11,000 - 19,999	13	9%
20,000 - 34,999	22	14%
35,000 - 49,999	6	4%
50,000 - 74,999	7	5%
75,000 - 99,999	5	3%
more than 100,000	22	14%
Total	140	92%

NOTE: 13 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

Methods to count visitor attendance included: attendance at events or programs; car counts; visitor center counts; gate admissions; registrations; spot counts and estimates; rentals; parking fees; vehicle and trail counters; and attendance at pools, golf courses, and other activities.

From the below graph, correlations can be made when analyzing the data between the types of organizations and number of users served. In smaller communities, “parks only systems” are more common. Conversely, in larger communities, there are far more “parks and trails systems” offered. It should also be noted that although “trail only systems” have a low frequency of respondents, trail only systems may serve multiple communities, as in the case of the Cardinal Greenway, which spans several counties.

Figure 1.1 Crosstabulation of Organizations and Users Served



Types of Resources Managed by the Respondents

Table 1.6 Type of Organization

Type of Organization	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Parks Only	51	33%
Parks and Trails	83	54%
Trails Only	8	5%
Total	142	93%

NOTE: 11 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

This was the first survey where we tried to add trail organizations to the leaders. We were glad to have some respond. Also, in the first question of the survey about roles in organizations, we saw respondents indicating their involvement in trails in other ways, as well as volunteer and friends of group roles.

Table 1.7 Total Acres Managed

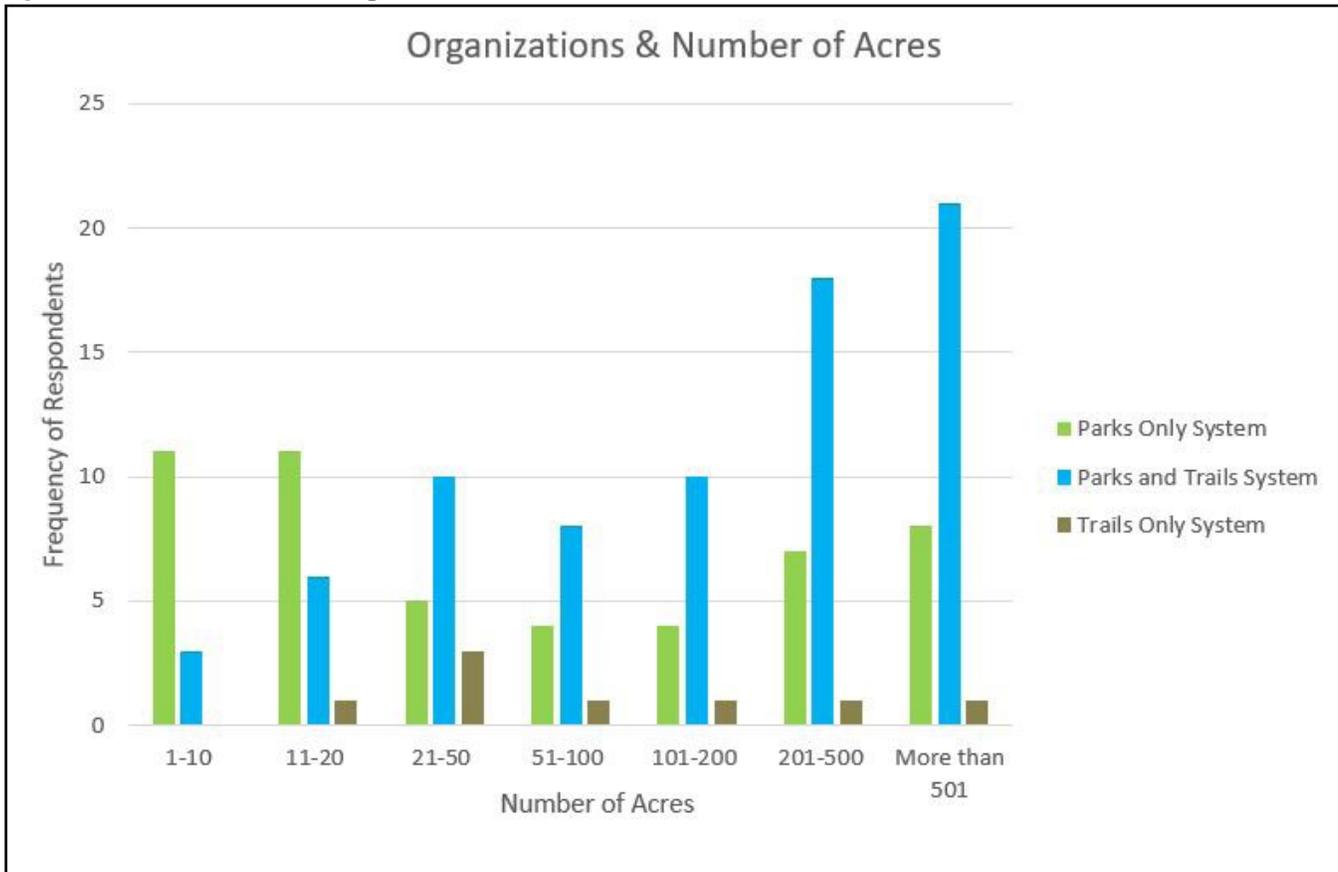
Number of Acres	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1 - 10	14	9%
11 - 20	18	12%
21 - 50	18	12%
51 - 100	13	9%
101 - 200	15	10%
201 - 500	26	17%
More than 500	30	20%
Total	134	88%

NOTE: 19 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

Typical of Indiana, some communities have few acres while others have large park systems. The distribution would not approximate a normal distribution.

From the graph below, we can see the correlations between the types of organizations and the number of acres managed. Properties with fewer

Figure 1.2 Crosstabulation of Organizations and Number of Acres



acres indicate having more “parks only systems” (e.g., city parks with a playground but no trails). Organizations that offer “parks and trails” combined tend to have more acres in the hundreds. “Trails only” organizations tend to be measured in miles, though some trail organizations manage small parks, (such as Cardinal Greenways, which manages Craddock Wetlands near the White River Trail in our town).

More than 4,200 miles of trails are offered throughout the entire state, many of which span counties, such as the Cardinal Greenway, Nickel Plate Trail, Monon Trail and Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. Trails are managed by local, state, federal and non-profit organizations.

Low-frequency trends in “trails only systems” can be seen in all the above crosstabulation graphs. Many of the “trail only systems” offered throughout the state are managed by smaller entities (e.g., non-profit organizations). “Trail only systems” can also span across many counties, and their total reach may not be fully accounted for by individual providers.

Table 1.8 **Total Miles of Trails Managed**

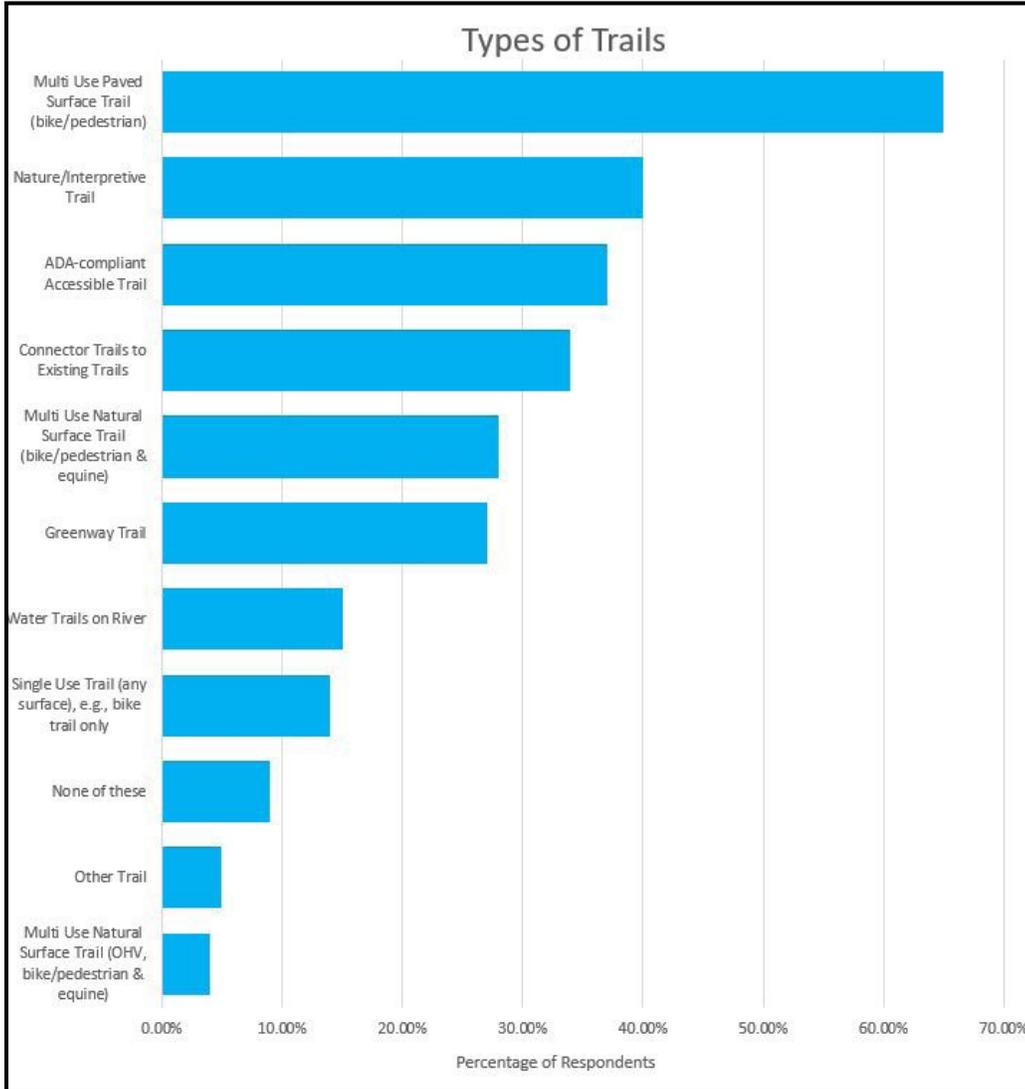
Miles of Trails	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1 - 5	24	16%
6 - 10	19	12%
11 - 20	13	9%
21 - 30	15	10%
31 - 50	5	3%
51 - 70	2	1%
71 - 100	2	1%
More than 100	4	3%
Total	84	55%

NOTE: 69 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

Figure 1.3 **Crosstabulation of Organizations and Miles of Trails**



Figure 1.4 **Types of Trails Offered**



The most popular responses were multiuse paved trail (N = 99); interpretive trail (N = 61) and ADA-compliant accessible trail (N = 57).

NOTE: Respondents could choose one or more responses if applicable.

Table 1.9 **Types of Trails Offered**

Types of Trails	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Multi Use Paved Surface Trail (bike/pedestrian)	99	65%
Nature/Interpretive Trail	61	40%
ADA-compliant Accessible Trail	57	37%
Connector Trails to Existing Trails	52	34%
Multi Use Natural Surface Trail (bike/pedestrian & equine)	42	28%
Greenway Trail	41	27%
Water Trails on River	23	15%
Single Use Trail (any surface), e.g., bike trail only	22	14%
None of these	14	9%
“Other” Trail	7	5%
Multi Use Natural Surface Trail (OHV, bike/pedestrian & equine)	6	4%

Table 1.10 Preventative Maintenance as Reported by Respondents

Use of Preventative Maintenance	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	117	77%
No	17	11%
Total	134	88%

NOTE: 19 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

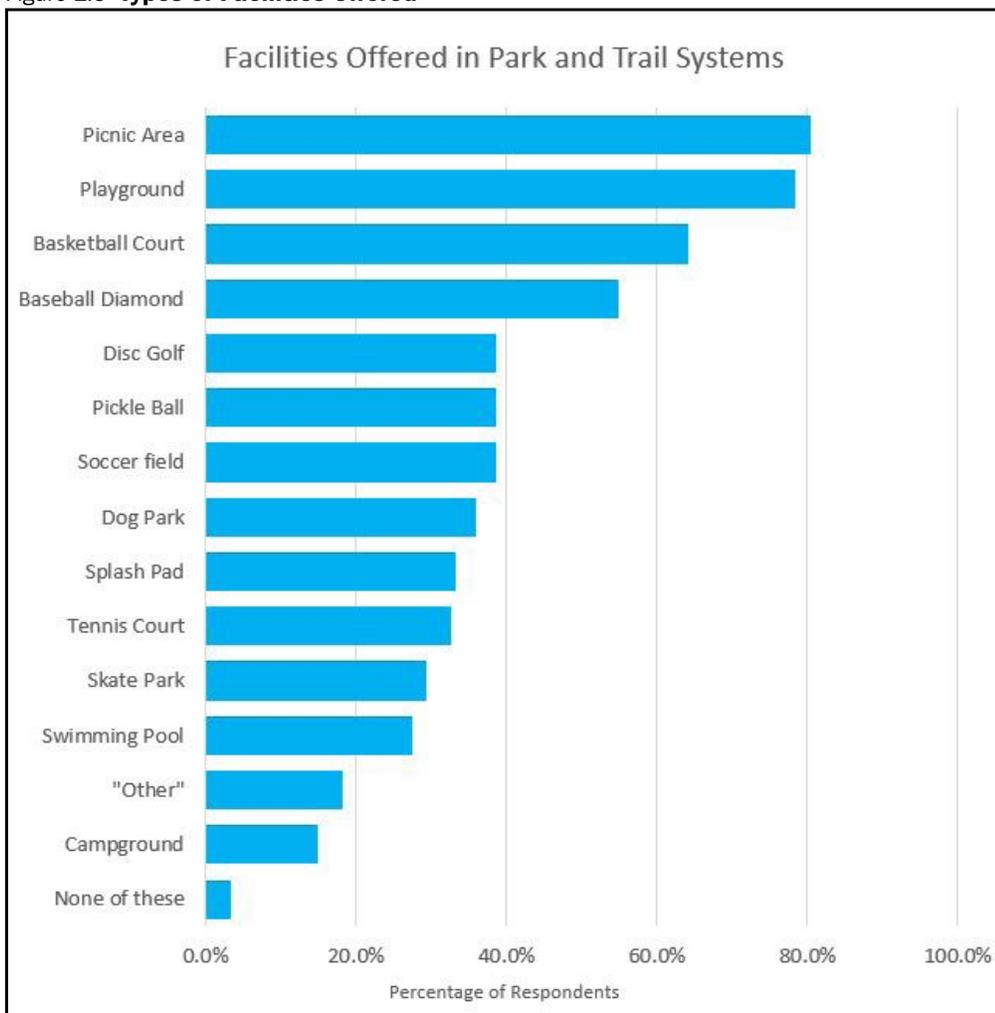
Respondents who answered “yes” were asked to provide examples of the preventative maintenance they implement on their properties. Many responses included buildings, facilities and road maintenance; servicing equipment; routine inspections; trail and lawn maintenance; removal of invasive species; trimming and pruning; weed treatments; and removal of dead/dying plants and trees.

Facilities and Activities

Respondents who answered “other” were asked to provide examples of the types of facilities they offer. Many responses included athletic fields and courts for volleyball, softball, golf, “drone zones,” and archery; areas for group activities like horseshoe and cornhole; amphitheatres, stages and indoor theaters; festival areas; boat launches and marinas; community gardens; nature preserves; botanical and animal conservatories; community centers and shelters; recreation centers; nature centers; and horse stalls.

A table of frequencies is provided on the next page.

Figure 1.5 Types of Facilities Offered



NOTE: Respondents could choose one or more responses if applicable.

Table 1.11 **Types of Facilities Offered**

Types of Facilities	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Picnic Area	123	80%
Playground	120	78%
Basketball Court	98	64%
Baseball Diamond	84	55%
Disc Golf	59	39%
Pickle Ball	59	39%
Soccer field	59	39%
Dog Park	55	36%
Splash Pad	51	33%
Tennis Court	50	33%
Skate Park	45	29%
Swimming Pool	42	28%
“Other”	28	18%
Campground	23	15%
“None”	5	3%

NOTE: Respondents could choose one or more responses if applicable.

Table 1.12 **Special Events**

Host Special Events	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	117	75%
No	12	8%
Total	129	84%

NOTE: 24 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

Respondents who answered “yes” were asked to provide examples of special events their organization hosts. Many responses included park and river clean-ups; native plant sales; volunteering events; fundraising; educational events for people of all ages; boy and girl scout events; community events with local first responders; holiday festivals and parades; cultural and heritage festivals; car shows; music festivals, dances and movies; arts and craft fairs; petting zoos; flea markets; farmers markets; cook offs and pitch ins; athletic lessons and tournaments; marathons and triathlons; community bike rides; fishing

tournaments; boat races; reunions, parties and weddings; conferences; and historical reenactments.

Asked how often respondents host special events:

Table 1.13 **Frequency of Special Events**

Frequency of Special Events	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Once a week	6	4%
More than once a week	8	5%
More than once a month	23	15%
Once a month	10	7%
Once a season (Fall, Summer, etc.)	27	18%
More than once a season	19	12%
Once a year	15	10%
Other	8	5%
Total	116	76%

NOTE: 37 of 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

Respondents who answered “other” reported hosting events at irregular times throughout the year.

Asked if respondents offer recreational programs for the public:

Table 1.14 **Public Recreational Programs**

Offer Public Recreation Programs	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	76	50%
No	53	35%
Total	129	84%

NOTE: 24 of the 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

Respondents who answered “yes” were asked to provide examples of special events their organization hosts and how often. Many responses included guided nature hikes; educational events for school kids; athletic leagues for all ages; fitness and wellness classes for all ages; fishing programs; and summer camps. Many of the recreational programs listed were offered either weekly, monthly, seasonally, etc.

Budgets, Funding and Partnerships

Table 1.15 **2021-2022 Estimated Operations & Maintenance Budgets**

Operating Budgets Reported	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
0 - 10,000	10	6%
10,800 - 30,000	8	5%
35,000 - 60,000	6	4%
63,000 - 100,000	6	4%
106,800 - 500,000	30	20%
520,000 - 980,000	15	10%
1,000,000 - 2,000,000	16	11%
2,100,000 - 5,000,000	11	7%
6,000,000 - 39,000,000	8	5%
Total	110	72%

NOTE: 43 of the total 153 total respondents are not represented in this table.

The mode (most reported budget number) was \$400,000. These figures may be skewed because the survey sample does not fully capture the number of small park systems across Indiana: at least half of all Indiana park systems are small systems from small, revenue-challenged communities. Many small town park systems have no full time staff or active boards that could answer this survey.

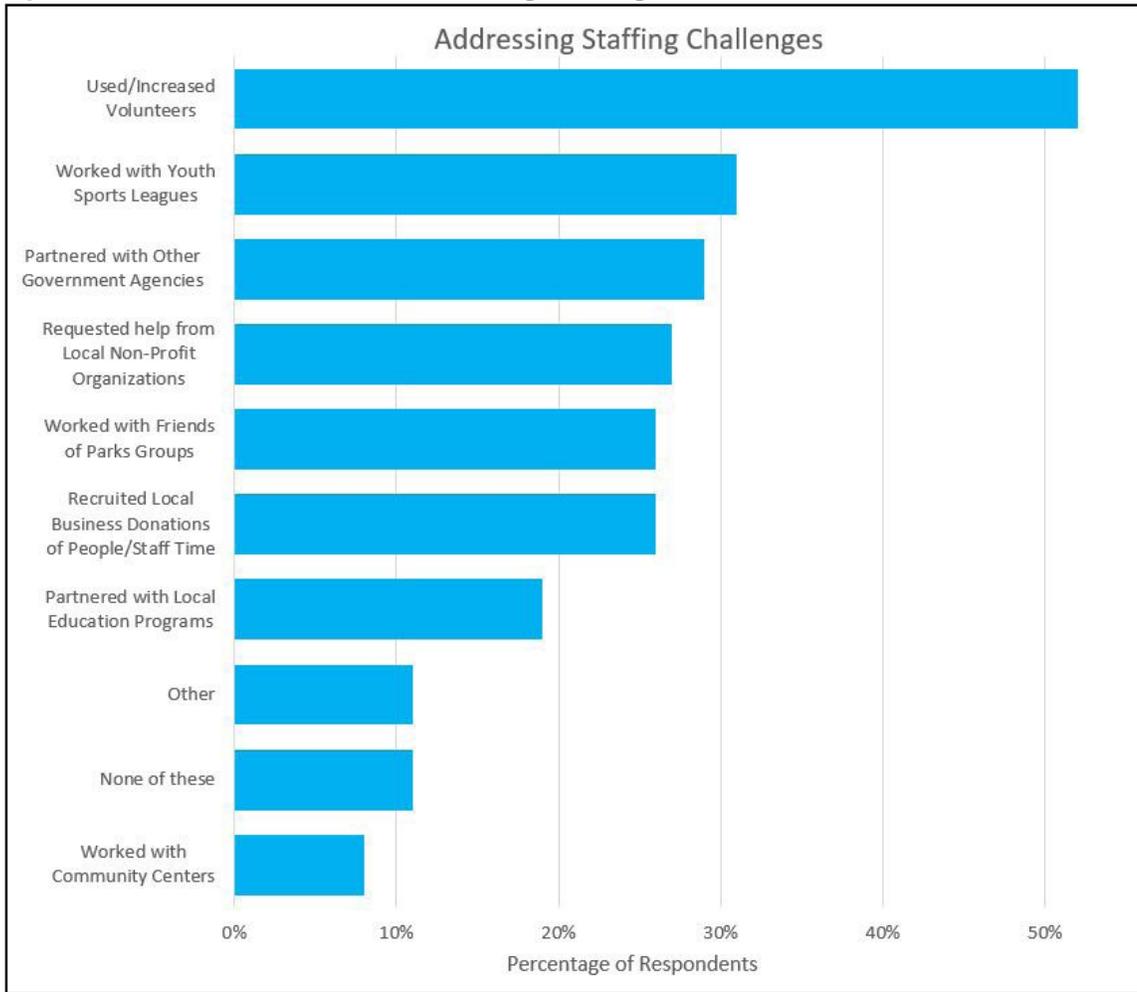
Asked about changes in their yearly budgets since 2021, respondents reported:

- 66% reported an increase.
- 11% reported a decrease.
- 23% reported no change.



Staffing

Figure 1.6 Measures Taken to Address Staffing Challenges



Respondents who answered “other” were asked to provide examples of how they have addressed staffing challenges. Many responses reported increased wages and benefits; recruitment and retention efforts and incentives; marketing tactics; student involvement; and correctional facility involvement.

(The graph above and the table below display the same data results.)

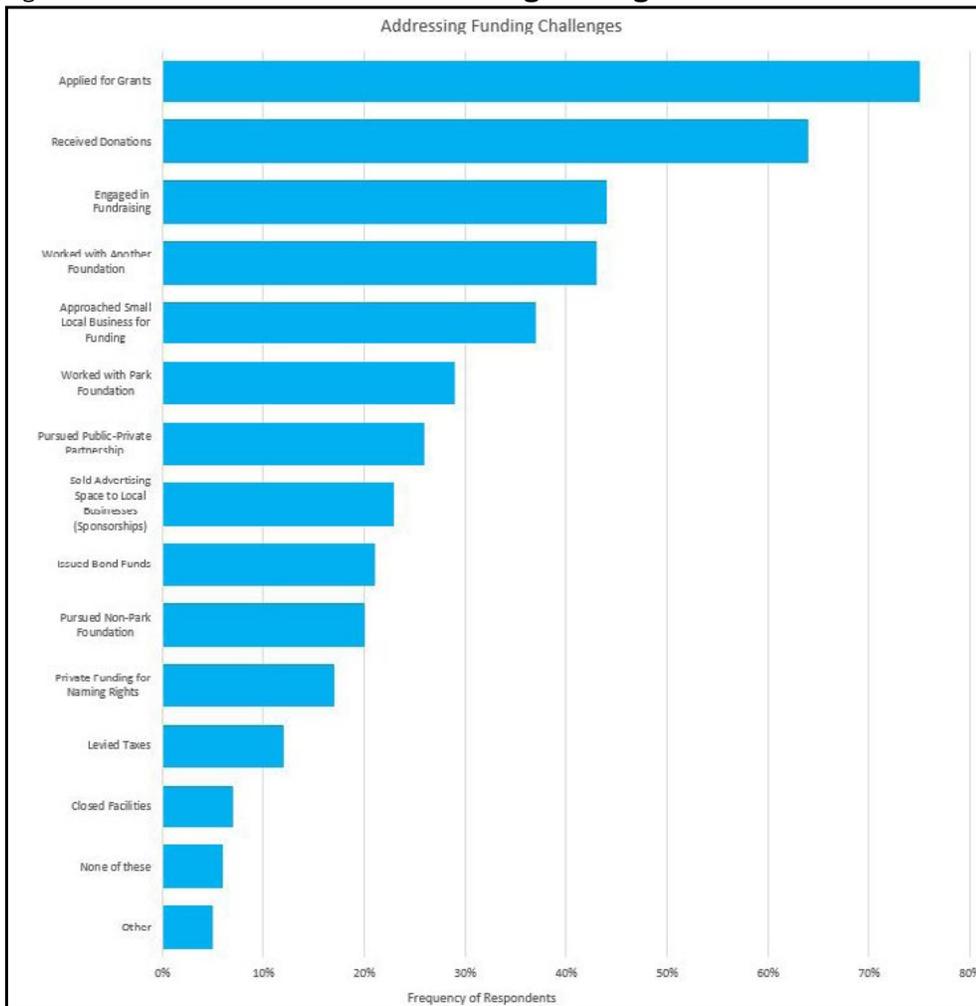
Table 1.16 Measures to Address Staffing Challenges

Addressing Staffing Challenges	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Used/Increased Volunteers	79	52%
Worked with Youth Sports Leagues	47	31%
Partnered with Other Government Agencies	44	29%
Requested help from Local Nonprofit Organizations	41	27%
Worked with Friends of Parks Groups	39	26%
Recruited Local Business Donations of People/Staff Time	39	26%
Partnered with Local Education Programs	29	19%
Other	17	11%
None of these	16	11%
Worked with Community Centers	12	8%

NOTE: Respondents could choose one or more responses if applicable.

Funding

Figure 1.7 Measures Taken to Address Funding Challenges



(The graph and Table 17 display the same data results.)

Table 1.17 Measures to Address Funding Challenges

Addressing Funding Challenges	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Applied for Grants	114	75%
Received Donations	98	64%
Engaged in Fundraising	67	44%
Worked with Another Foundation	66	43%
Approached Small Local Business for Funding	56	37%
Worked with Park Foundation	45	29%
Pursued Public-Private Partnership	39	26%
Sold Advertising Space to Local Businesses (Sponsorships)	35	23%
Issued Bond Funds	32	21%
Pursued Non-Park Foundation	30	20%
Private Funding for Naming Rights	26	17%
Levied Taxes	19	12%
Closed Facilities	10	7%
None of these	9	6%
Other	7	5%

NOTE: Respondents could choose multiple responses.

Respondents who answered “other” were asked to provide examples of how they have addressed staffing challenges. Many responses reported using volunteers; support organizations; town-county partnerships; and leasing land.

Respondents also reported collaborating with the following organizations:

- 25% with nonprofit providers (e.g., YMCA).
- 20% with school systems providing recreation.
- 20% reported “none of these”.
- 11% with health organizations or hospitals.
- 11% with historical societies.
- 9% with state properties.
- 3% with federal properties.

In addition to funding and/or staffing challenges, respondents reported critical issues to be addressed in their parks and trails systems. Many of the issues reported were aging infrastructure and equipment; vandalism and security; developing master plans; membership; improving land management practices; improving ADA-compliance; land acquisition and expansion; trail expansion; and greater support from local governments.

THE TRAILS USER SURVEY

Trails User Survey Methods:

- The survey used a paper intercept questionnaire.
- The questionnaire was 20 questions long.
- The estimated time needed to take the survey was between three and six minutes.
- Paper survey results were manually entered into the database post-survey.
- Respondents were chosen on a next-available basis.
- People under the age of 17 were not discouraged from taking the survey, but they also were not actively recruited.
- The survey was conducted at county fairs, libraries and other public locations throughout the state.
- The survey took place from February 2022 through November of 2022.
- The completed database consists of 1,089 respondents, representing every county in the state.

Trails User Survey demographic results:

- 46.6% of respondents were male, and 53.4% were female.
- Average age of respondents was 43.
- 77% of respondents were white (non-Hispanic), 11.8% Black/African-American and 5.3% Hispanic (Demographics of responses roughly track with statewide data according to 2020 U.S. Census estimates).
- Every county statewide across Indiana was proportionally represented in the data.

Trails User Survey results:

- Walking/Running/Jogging is the trail activity most participated in. The general public is three to four times more likely to use trails for walking/running/jogging than for most other activities.
- More than 80% of respondents use trails for walking sometime during the year.
- The top five trail activities respondents did more than once per week were:
 1. Walking, Running, Jogging
 2. Bicycle Touring (Road, Touring, Casual, etc.) {TIED with Alternative Transportation}
 3. Using Trails for Alternative Transportation {TIED with Bicycle Touring}
 4. Off-Road Vehicle Riding (Motorcycle, 4-Wheeler, UTV, Jeep, etc.)
 5. Hiking/Backpacking
- The top five trail activities respondents did at least once per month were:
 1. Walking, Running, Jogging
 2. Hiking/Backpacking
 3. Bicycle Touring (Road, Touring, Casual, etc.)
 4. Using Trails for Alternative Transportation
 5. Canoeing/Kayaking on water trails or blueways
- The top five trail activities respondents did at least once per year were:
 1. Canoeing/Kayaking on water trails or blueways
 2. Hiking/Backpacking
 3. Walking, Running, Jogging
 4. Horseback Riding
 5. Bicycle Touring (Road, Touring, Casual, etc.)
- The top three reasons why respondents used trails were:
 1. Pleasure, relaxation, recreation (92.2%)
 2. Health/Physical training (70.8%)
 3. Family or social outing (69.4%)

- Asked what trail activity they would like to participate in at least 12 times per year in the future, respondents said:
 1. Walking/running/jogging (76.6%)
 2. Hiking/backpacking (47.5%)
 3. Bicycle touring (casual, touring or both)(39.1%)
 4. Canoeing/kayaking on water trails. . . (36.0%)
 (Multiple responses were allowed.)
- 72% of respondents said there was a trail within 5 miles or 10 minutes of their home.
- 42% selected native soil as their preferred trail surface, 32% prefer asphalt, 17% had no preference for trail surface type, and 9% preferred wood chips.
- 83% of those who had an opinion said that they either strongly or somewhat agreed that trail connectivity should be an important part of a community's infrastructure (up from 81% in the last SCORP).
- Respondents believed that trail connectivity was extremely important for:
 1. Personal Health (62.4%)
 2. Community Health (60.8%)
 3. Environmental Health (49.2%)
 4. Community Economic Development . (36.3%)
 (Multiple responses were allowed)
- Word of mouth was the top way that respondents found out about trail opportunities. Signage at parks was 2nd; Trail websites was 3rd; Community Media was 4th.
- Asked why they do not use trails as much as they would like;
 1. Personal barriers (no time, no motivation, lack of skills, physical /mental/emotional health, ability level, etc.) were cited by 41.8% of respondents.
 2. 32% of respondents said they participated as much as they wanted to.
 3. 15.0% of respondents said that social barriers (no one to participate with, family conflicts, responsibility to others, etc.) limited their use.
 4. 14.3% of respondents said that there were no trails close to their home.
 5. 10.0% of respondents said that structural barriers (safety, transportation, poor setting, physical environment, etc.) limited their use.
- Respondents who reported being limited in participating in trail activities by health factors cited issues with walking as their most common limitation. Breathing issues were the second most cited limitation.
- 34.5% of respondents stated that there were no improvements that would increase their use of trails, 28.7% would like to see better trail surfaces, and another 21.8% would like increased personal safety measures.
- 36% of respondents are only willing to spend less than \$100 annually on trail activities; 34% are willing to spend between \$100 and \$500; 12% are willing to spend between \$501 and \$1,000.
- Asked the distance trail users are willing to travel (one way) to participate in trail activities;
 1. 15.2% said 0-5 miles.
 2. 13.8% said more than 100 miles.
 3. 12.0% said 36-50 miles.
 4. 11.6% said 26-35 miles.
 5. 11.3% said 51-75 miles.
- Asked what primary sources for funding the *development of new trails*, (after first pursuing all federal funds, grants, and donations) respondents preferred:
 1. State general taxes 31.4%
 2. Local taxes 17.6%
 3. None 16.4%
 4. Trail use fee 15.6%
 5. Land development fees 12.9%
 6. State tax on recreation equipment 9.1%
 7. Other 5.9%
 8. Local bond issue 4.5%
 (Multiple responses were allowed)
- Asked what primary sources for funding the *operations/maintenance of existing trails*, (after first pursuing all federal funds, grants, and donations) respondents preferred:
 1. State general taxes 29.8%
 2. Local taxes 21.4%
 3. Trail use fee 19.6%
 4. None 15.7%
 5. State tax on recreation equipment . . . 14.1%
 6. Other 7.3%
 (Multiple responses were allowed)

• Respondents were asked how much they would be willing to pay for an annual trail fee if money was spent in their local area to help support trail up-keep and new trail development. Their responses were:

1. Less than \$5: 30.5%
2. \$5.00 - \$9.99 24.7%
3. \$10.00 - \$14.9917.5%
4. \$15.00 - \$19.99 10.1%
5. \$20.00 or more17.2%

• Respondents were asked how well the current supply of trails in Indiana met their needs in specific ways:

	Supply is more than enough	Supply is just right	Supply is OK for now but needs to be increased in the future	Supply does not meet my needs	Uncertain, don't know current supply	Don't use
Using trails for alternative transportation routes	52-4.8%	98-9.0%	199-18.2%	143-13.1%	117-10.7%	482-44.2%
Walking/running/jogging	126-11.5%	296-27.1%	310-28.4%	89-8.2%	75-6.9%	195-17.9%
Hiking/backpacking	73-6.7%	218-20.0%	247-22.6%	111-10.2%	107-9.8%	335-30.7%
Bicycle touring (casual, tour or both)	66-6.1%	176-16.1%	241-22.1%	102-9.3%	89-8.2%	417-38.2%
Mountain bike riding	38-3.5%	91-8.3%	119-10.9%	87-8.0%	121-11.1%	635-58.2%
In-line skating	27-2.5%	69-6.3%	72-6.6%	48-4.4%	121-11.1%	754-69.1%
Cross country skiing	25-2.3%	47-4.3%	64-5.9%	51-4.7%	140-12.8%	764-70.0%
Snowmobiling	21-1.9%	49-4.5%	61-5.6%	53-4.9%	145-13.3%	762-69.8%
Off road vehicle riding (motorcycle, 4-wheel, ATV, etc.)	25-2.3%	65-6.0%	108-9.9%	72-6.6%	138-12.6%	683-62.6%
Canoeing/kayaking on water trails or blueways	45-4.1%	157-14.4%	194-17.8%	81-7.4%	137-12.6%	477-43.7%
Horseback riding	35-3.2%	73-6.7%	94-8.6%	64-5.9%	137-12.6%	688-63.0%

The next chapter will compare and contrast these datasets with selected research from outside sources. Emergent themes and trends as well as the limitations of the surveys will be discussed.



CHAPTER 2

Themes & Trends

Chapter Two compares and contrasts the survey data presented in Chapter One and analyzes emerging themes and trends. A needs assessment was created from the theme/trend analysis, which formed the basis for the Outdoor Recreation Priorities for Public Parks and Recreation Providers and Stakeholders listed at the end of the Introduction (pg. 9). This chapter uses survey data to determine the preferences and needs of the state’s users of parks and recreation facilities, as well as those of parks professionals statewide.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEYS

The surveys used by the DNR to create each SCORP are not necessarily scientifically correct in their methodology due to:

- Lack of funds and time to create the “ideal” scientific survey before each SCORP planning cycle ends.
- The expense and challenges inherent in successfully surveying an entire state of more than 6.8 million people in a fully random manner.
- The expense and challenges of surveying busy park professionals or park board members, who work for more than 1,600 units of local government.
- The moving-target problem, in which constant changes in statewide demographics, economics, legislation, funding, etc., combine to provide DNR

staff an impossible number of variables to completely account for or tabulate.

These mixed-method surveys provide informational, statewide insights but are not statistically random. Results should be interpreted as representative of expressed preferences rather than probability-weighted estimates. Where possible, findings are triangulated with national datasets (e.g., NRPA 2024 Agency Performance Review) to validate key trends.

DNR staff members do their best to minimize each of these limitations, and the SCORP surveys are designed to provide the best possible representation of the needs, desires and preferences of users and managers of the state’s parks and recreation facilities. All surveys used in this SCORP are designed to best represent all Hoosiers statewide, while making the most efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars.

MIXED METHOD SURVEYING IN THIS SCORP

This SCORP features surveys that use methodologies that run the gamut from old-school paper intercept surveys to fully automated online surveys. Mixed-method public-input surveying is generally the best way to ensure good demographic representation in a sample. The advances in survey technology have

provided useful new ways for DNR to discover what Hoosiers prefer and want from outdoor recreation. All survey methods have both advantages and drawbacks, so the multiple methods used in this SCORP’s surveys are combined to reach as complete and representative a statewide demographic sample as possible.

EXAMINING THE SURVEYS

Two of the surveys for this SCORP sampled all Indiana residents: the 2023 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey and the 2023 Trails User Survey. These surveys asked people about their participation in outdoor recreation activities, barriers to recreation, funding, and barriers to participation. The other survey used in this SCORP, the 2023 Local Parks and Recreation Provider Survey, was intended to provide a statewide sample of all Indiana park superintendents, park board members, local government officials, trail system administrators, and others who work with county and municipal parks and recreation facilities and programs. This survey asked park professionals and other recreation providers about what

types of facilities they operated, their budgets and revenue, capital projects, recreation programming, facility inventories, funding issues, ADA compliance and staffing.

All three surveys were created independently of each other, with separate goals, question sets, survey populations, and results. Direct comparisons between the surveys aren’t a main goal of the SCORP; the variances between the surveys are a deliberate strategy to provide as diverse a dataset as financially possible, given the time constraints. As mentioned in Chapter One, these three different survey population samples were intended to try to ascertain outdoor recreation needs statewide from both the provider and user viewpoints. Table 2.1 illustrates the methods used to produce the surveys.

A fourth survey used in this SCORP is the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review, formerly known as the NRPA Field Report. The Performance Review can be downloaded at: nrpa.org/siteassets/research/2024-agency-performance-review.pdf

The NRPA Agency Performance Review is an

Table 2.1 **Survey Methods**

Survey Name	Date(s) of Survey	Number of people surveyed (n)	Survey Method(s)	Survey intended for (N)	Subject matter covered
2023 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey (Survey America)	February 2022 through December 2023	6,203 respondents statewide	Paper intercept survey	All IN residents	Recreation participation, barriers, funding, activities
2023 Local Park and Recreation Provider Survey (Ball State University)	October 2022 through March of 2023	153 Park professional respondents statewide	Online survey	IN Park superintendents, park board members, local government officials, and others who work with local parks and recreation facilities and programs	Facilities operated, budgets, capital projects, programming, renovations, funding, competition, staffing
2023 Trails User Survey (Survey America)	February 2022 through November Of 2022	1,089 respondents statewide	Paper intercept survey	All IN residents	Trail activities, motivations, barriers, connectivity, surfaces, funding preferences
2024 NRPA* “Agency Performance Review”	Database began in 2010; 2024 Review data gathered between 2021 and 2023	Nearly 1,200 Park Systems Reporting data: Nationwide	Self-reported local data on park systems and programs	All US park departments, big or small	Park sites, budgets, amenities, staff, management, Trends, etc.

*NRPA = National Recreation and Parks Association

analysis of data contained in NRPA’s nationwide Park Metrics public parks and recreation database, formerly known as the Parks and Recreation Operating Ratio And Geographic Information System (PRORAGIS) database. Park Metrics was originally created as PRORAGIS by NRPA in 2010 as a means to collect parks and recreation system data at the community, region, and national levels for use in comparative benchmarking between parks agencies and in parks research and planning of all types. The yearly Agency Review from NRPA uses a Park Metrics database analysis to create a valuable synopsis of national trends and statistics gleaned from thousands of individual community datasets from communities big and small, all over the country. This is the third SCORP to use this database-driven NRPA survey to double check and verify DNR’s statewide research surveys against a national data source.

RECURRING THEMES IN THE SURVEYS

Table 2.2 illustrates briefly some of the common themes that emerged during analysis of the data from all three surveys.

Walking/Jogging/Running now a 30-year No. 1 Hoosier Recreation Favorite

Since the 1995 SCORP, Walking/Jogging/Running has been the No. 1 most popular outdoor recreation activity for Hoosiers. In the Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey, 48.7% of respondents said they participated in walking/running/jogging for exercise or pleasure more than once per week. In the Trail User Survey, 83.1% of respondents said they walked on trails at least once per year, and 32.4% said that they walked on trails once per week or more. As noted in the 2016 SCORP, walking requires little or no skill or training, minimum equipment, no special facilities, costs little, and has no age limits. “Walking” may include a great many related activities, including but not limited to jogging, power walking, strolling, using a wheelchair, pushing a stroller, running, or simply travelling as a pedestrian.

Financial Constraints Continue to Affect Recreation Choices

Just as in the 2021 SCORP, all three 2026 SCORP surveys had question responses that indicat-

Table 2.2 **Common Survey Themes**

Survey Name	Preferred Recreation or Recreation Facility	Financial Constraints Continue to Affect Recreation Choices	Survey Respondents Are Being Careful With Their Fiscal Spending
2023 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey (Survey America)	Walking (#1 by a huge margin; over 10-1 over the #10 activity)	Largest single percentage of respondents (36%) spend less than \$100 annually on their favorite recreation activity (Up from 35% in 2021)	Respondents are actually participating at higher rates in mostly very low-cost/no-cost activities (like walking); while they say that the activities they hope to do in the future are more costly traditional outdoor activities, like camping/RV camping.
2023 Local Park and Recreation Provider Survey (Ball State University)	Trails or walking paths continue to be a major priority for many park systems	Vast majority of respondents again reported seeking funding beyond local tax revenues	Innovation for funding, staffing, programming, partnerships, etc. is still critical for park system success.
2023 Trail User Survey (Survey America)	Walking/Running/Jogging	30.5% of respondents say they would only pay less than \$5 to support new trail development via an annual trail fee	Top 3 (done more than once per week) trail activities were low-cost/no-cost: Walking, biking, alternative transportation; future uses included higher-cost activities like Horseback Riding.
2024 NRPA* Agency Performance Review (formerly the Field Report)	Trails or walking paths are still one of the most desired new park amenities	Nationwide, many public park systems report limited budgets and use of non-tax revenue	Park agencies report having to add amenities, programs, and more events, with no additional funds, ovr using non-tax funds

ed financial issues and limitations were on the minds of Hoosiers. In the Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey, 36% (the single largest percentage of respondents, up from 35% in the 2021 survey) said that they spend less than \$100 annually on their favorite recreation activity. A total of 30.5% of Trails Activity Survey participants (the single largest percentage of respondents in that survey) said the top amount they would be willing to spend to support new trail development, via an annual trails fee, was less than \$5. Local parks and recreation providers indicated they regularly used non-tax-based funding strategies to help pay for their parks: 75% applied for grants, 64% received donations, 43% worked with a Community Foundation, 12% levied taxes, and 7% said they closed facilities.

It's evident that many Hoosiers are still struggling financially and adjusting expenditures to compensate. This factor may be driving the continuing increases in the use of local parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs. Local sites have the advantage of reduced travel costs, low-or-no entry fees, minimum travel time and easier, more convenient access, as opposed to outdoor recreation activities far from home. Moderate fuel prices may be affecting this to some degree, but high-cost recreation options still appear to be used much less by those surveyed.

In Indiana, anecdotal data obtained through local parks and recreation master plans indicate that park use is continuing to be stable and in many cases is increasing. This likely reflects a complex set of variables, including individual community population growth/decline, local economic circumstances, size and variety of amenities in local park systems, availability of programming in the parks, and competition for local recreation participation from local nonprofits, commercial businesses, or larger-scale recreation sources (such as state or national parks or recreation sites). It should be kept in mind that many of the smallest public park systems in the state (the majority of park systems statewide) have the least acreage of park land per system, the least number of park amenities per park, and may have smaller tax bases to support park operations and maintenance, all of which can negatively affect park user experience and park attendance.

Hoosiers are doing more with less

All three primary surveys in this SCORP show that both the Hoosier public and park professionals are doing more with less. The Participation Survey clearly indicates that respondents are participating at higher rates in many low-cost or no-cost outdoor recreation activities, including but not limited to walking, gardening, relaxation/spiritual renewal, bicycle touring (casual, tour, or both), and outdoor pool swimming or water park use. The survey reported that respondents or others in the household participated in these activities more than once per week.

Growing user participation in these inexpensive outdoor recreation activities may be driven by a number of factors. These might include either small or no entry fees, low equipment costs, minimal skill needed to participate, no expensive training or assistance needed to start, short time commitments, and little or no travel costs.

Ordinary outdoor recreation activities commonly considered traditional include camping, fishing, canoeing, etc. The traditional public outdoor recreation activities were reported by respondents as having significant participation rates. These activities often have moderate entry fees, involve much higher equipment costs, require some skill or training, require taking vacation time from work, and usually take place far enough from home to require some travel cost.

These may be a few of the reasons why this Participation Survey in particular still has a significant difference between the activities that participants actually do often versus the activities that they say are their favorites. It is possible that tight budgets at home may restrict some Hoosiers from actually doing some of the more traditional outdoor recreation activities versus those activities that are close-to-home and cost less. Another possible explanation for the difference between the actual and preferred participation in outdoor recreation activities might be human nature. An example would be survey respondents' wishful thinking about what would be fun and adventurous outdoor recreation versus what life's circumstances often result in or allow. Fabulous vacations in exotic locales are something that many people dream of, but most seldom actually get to a location more exotic than a local amusement park.

Doing more with less is a vital skill for outdoor recreation providers. Due to tight budgets, limited

revenues, minimal or reduced staff, and increasing public demand for facilities, services and programs, providers are innovating by necessity. In the Outdoor Recreation Provider Survey, public park operators reported that creative methodologies for obtaining funds, acquiring staff, creating and operating programs, and forging new partnerships are necessary and key to providing sustainable, high-quality recreation services and amenities in these difficult economic times.

Trails users may also be doing more with less. Similar to the results of the Participation Survey, respondents to the Trail User Survey said that their top three trail activities were Walking, Bicycle Touring (Casual, tour, or both), and using Trails as Alternative Transportation Routes. All three uses are of low-cost or no-cost to the user. Asked what trail activity they would like to participate in at least once per year, Trail User Survey respondents said Canoeing/Kayaking, Hiking/Backpacking, Walking/Running/Jogging, Horseback Riding, and Bicycle Touring (casual, tour, or both). As occasional trail uses, Canoeing/Kayaking, Hiking/Backpacking, and Horseback Riding can all have a significantly higher equipment/gear cost.

This difference in activities completed versus activities intended coincides with the Provider Survey results. Cost of activity is possibly one of the factors in this difference, but the complexity of the variables involved makes this possibility conjecture. Another possibility is the previously mentioned idea of doing what is immediately available and easy within the constraints of daily life versus the more difficult to achieve but more attractive “dream” future activity. With only one activity different between “what we do” versus “what we intend/hope to do” results in this survey, that difference is more likely to be circumstantial. This difference may be something that can be further investigated in future SCORP/Trails Plan research.

NRPA Research Results Support 2026 SCORP Findings

The 2024 Agency Performance Review published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is somewhat less useful to the SCORP than in previous iterations. A chapter on trends and issues in the 2019 Review listed a series of five trends and includes a discussion of how each af-

fects public outdoor recreation for better or worse. The 2024 Review does not contain much of this sort of analytical summation, and concentrates on purely reporting numbers, averages, and data for public parks and recreation nationwide. That said, the 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review did largely agree with and support some of the data gathered in this SCORP. As one example, the Review reported that the national data agreed that public park systems (“agency,” as they are often referred to in the Review) nationally have a heavy investment in and inventory of trails and walking facilities. The Review reported that: “... many agencies provide trails, greenways, and other walking areas for community members. The typical park and recreation agency is responsible for managing 16 miles of trails. This figure increases as the jurisdiction population an agency serves increases. Agencies serving populations of more than 250,000 people typically manage 97 miles of trails.” The Review in 2024 reports that public park systems nationwide are having to use non-tax revenue to support their parks, with communities under 20,000 in population achieving a median cost recovery of 29.5% of their operating expenditures. The median figure for park systems serving populations more than 250,000 people was only 17.9%.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section provides an overview of the needs identified by analyzing survey data, national trends, and related information. These identified needs directly contribute to the Outdoor Recreation Priorities listed at the end of the Introduction.

Identified needs from the surveys

More varied kinds of trail or trail-related facilities (especially pedestrian) are needed.

- Recreation programmers and planners should remember that there is a wide diversity of trail users, and that multi-purpose trail facilities are likely to better serve the needs of their many publics than single-use sites. People use trails for all kinds of reasons, in all kinds of ways, and developing a trail system that caters to as many different types of users as possible is more likely to be successful, as well as lowering the opportunity cost for each additional trail- use type. One example of a newer trail

type/use is water trails or blueways, and support for this type of trail and trail use exists in Indiana.

- The results of all three surveys showed that many kinds of trails use are growing and are in great demand statewide by a variety of users. This is especially true of trails with a pedestrian focus or emphasis. National data fully agree with this growing pedestrian trail use trend, now in its third decade in Indiana.

Natural-resource-based recreation of many kinds is still a major need among Hoosiers.

- Water-based recreation of all kinds is still extremely popular and has expanded beyond traditional activities such as boating; kayaking; canoeing; and swimming in lakes, ponds and rivers, to more developed urban water recreational activities such as using splashpads and waterparks/spray parks.
- Nonconsumptive natural-resource-based recreation is a strongly growing area of use that includes activities such as birdwatching, nature photography and observation, camping, swimming, and more. In the Participation Survey, all of the top five outdoor recreation activities actually participated in “more than once per week” were nonconsumptive.
- More traditional consumptive resource-based recreation uses are still popular but less in demand (hunting, fishing, wild food gathering, etc.). In the Participation Survey, only one of the top five favorite outdoor recreation activities was consumptive.

Community and individual health and wellness needs are becoming a greater priority.

- The surveys indicate that Hoosiers are choosing to recreate outdoors as part of a growing awareness of outdoor recreation’s positive effect on their health.
- It is becoming common for health providers (e.g., hospitals, health clinics, physicians) to actively cooperate with parks and recreation agencies for programs, infrastructure, and community health/wellness initiatives.
- Health and wellness as motivators for outdoor recreation of all kinds appeared to cross all demographics—all types of people were recreating for health reasons.

Use of and demand for local parks and recreation appears to be growing.

- Many reasons are driving an increase in use of local parks and recreation.
 - Local parks and recreation offer better options to recreate for users limited by time or opportunity.
 - The slow-growing economy is affecting recreation use in households, and local parks and recreation options are often free or low-cost.
 - Health-conscious visitors are using local and regional parks more.
- Communities are responding to economic and social pressures.
 - Parks and recreation is seen as an economic engine in local communities. Strong parks and recreation programs encourage users to spend their recreation dollars close to home, not just in parks, but in local businesses, restaurants, etc. while those park users are in the area.
 - Tourism dollars are attractive to cash-strapped communities.
 - New businesses gravitate toward communities that offer a strong quality of life, health, and wellness for their work force.
 - New residents attracted to a community bring new tax revenues. Residents who leave take their tax money with them. Hoosiers indicate where they prefer to live by moving there.

Funding is tight for parks and recreation. Adaptation and innovation are vital.

- Users continue to rate increased fees as one of their least favorite ways to pay for access to parks and recreation.
- Greater use of existing parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services are driving up the costs of operation and maintenance of facilities for local providers.
 - Preventive maintenance is more important than ever—it is cheaper to extend the useful life of amenities by carefully caring for facilities and equipment than to replace them.
 - Life-cycle costing, in which the lifetime costs of operating and maintaining facilities and equipment are planned for and considered over time has become a best management practice for parks and recreation professionals.

- Careful outsourcing or privatizing of operations and maintenance services in some cases can lead to real-world cost savings without loss of quality of service or product. Savings must be verified, documented, and analyzed over time (not all privatizations save money over time).
 - Use of volunteers, creation of friends groups, in-kind donation of equipment and services, donations, bequests, corporate sponsorships, and other innovative financial and operational strategies are helping budget-conscious providers meet their organization's needs.
 - Due in large part to property tax rate cuts and caps, property tax revenues remain down in many communities. This forces tight budgets, affecting parks and recreation's most traditional funding source.
 - Parks and recreation providers who actively seek innovative new ways to fund their programs or partner/cooperate with, are the most successful providers. RIF, TIF, COIT and many others offer alternatives for communities to fund not only acquisition, but also development, operations, and long-term maintenance of their parks systems.
 - State-level grants are both more important than ever for local communities to acquire and develop their future parks and recreation resources, and harder for local governments to find match money to contribute to. Once again, those who can think creatively to amass match funds are the most successful.
- The next chapter of the document will focus on:
- Guidelines for recreation, parks, and open space.
 - Local, regional, and total outdoor recreation supply.
 - Total outdoor recreation acres.
 - Critical counties and regions.

Table 2.3 Activity Trends

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
1	Hiking/Walking/Jogging	Hiking/Walking/Jogging	Hiking/Walking/Jogging	Hiking/Walking/Jogging	Hiking/Walking/Jogging	Walking, Running, Jogging	Hiking, Walking, Running
2	Picnicking	Fairs/Festivals	Fairs/Festivals	Camping	Camping	Camping, RV Camping	Camping, RV Camping
3	Swimming	Fishing	Swimming/SCUBA/Snorkeling	Picnicking	Fishing	Hiking, Backpacking	Boating, Kayaking, Canoeing
4	Camping	Camping	Nature Observation/Photography	Fishing	Swimming	Fishing	Swimming, Water Activities
5	Fishing/Hunting	Picnicking	Camping	Swimming	Canoeing, Kayaking, Paddle sports	Boating, Wakeboarding, Water Skiing, Sailing	Fishing
6	Bicycling	Swimming/SCUBA/Snorkeling	Fishing	Boating/Water Skiing/personal watercraft	Bicycling	Picnicking, Barbecue/Cookouts	Golf
7	Boating	Nature Observation/Photography	Picnicking	Golf	Hunting	Gardening, Landscaping, Yard Work	Bicycling
8	Nature Observation	Playground Use	Bicycling	Bicycling	Fairs/Festivals, Outdoor concerts	Swimming, Snorkeling, Diving	Gardening, Landscape & Yard Work
9	Playground Use	Bicycling	Off-road Motorized vehicle use	Hunting	Boating, Water skiing, Sailing	Bicycling	Fairs, Festivals, Concerts
10	Off-road Motorized Use	Boating/Water Skiing/personal watercraft	Boating/Water Skiing/personal watercraft	Horseback Riding	Off-road Motorized Use	Golf	Parks and Playgrounds



CHAPTER 3

Supply of Outdoor Recreation Acreage in Indiana

Chapter Three examines the current supply of outdoor recreation acreage in Indiana. The two previous chapters gave an overview of the public input for this SCORP, determined the main issues and trends, and subjected them to a needs analysis at the end of Chapter 2, which directly informs the SCORP goals shared at the end of the Introduction. The surveys looked at both the public point of view and that of the parks and recreation provider. The purpose was to better understand the outdoor recreation needs of all Hoosiers.

Looking at the supply of outdoor recreation acreage in Indiana gives us yet another measurement of assessing outdoor recreation needs. The DNR maintains an internal database of facilities statewide to help track the supply of these resources. This inventory database is maintained primarily from self-reported local government data, research (including the internet, park websites, etc.), and data reported in local five-year parks and recreation master plans kept on file with the DNR. This data is the best available, and given cost and time constraints, is as complete as the DNR can make it. Because the facility inventory database is more than 50 years old, the data has been “cleaned”, re-organized, and checked for accuracy as often as possible, but errors and changes happen. Re-checking aspects of the database and incremental improvements occurs as staff time allows. As one ex-

ample, stakeholders have previously claimed that the “school” category of acreage in the database could be a problem. In the preparations for this SCORP, the SCORP staff verified that the “school” category of acreage was not only outdated, incomplete and inaccurate, but its presence was biasing the calculations for the critical counties data, especially for lightly populated counties. DNR has not included schools as LWCF-eligible for decades, and this, in addition to the incomplete and inaccurate schools acreage data, was more than enough reason to remove the existing schools acreage entries from the database. Many of those school sites no longer existed due to school district consolidations and were essentially a false record of potential outdoor recreation acreage. The removal of the schools database entries, plus database record alterations and removal of other issues like duplicate entries, sites that were not actually available to the public, and previously undiscovered data entry errors, typos, and inaccurate entries resulted in removal of roughly 40,000 acres from the database, from a total of more than 950,000 acres statewide. This means that although slightly smaller, the database is now more accurate than in past SCORP cycles. The database has improved over time.

The data from this inventory are used in this chapter to compare the current amount of public outdoor

recreation acreage on the local, State/federal/non-profit, and total levels with national and state guidelines, and provide another basis for statewide strategic park planning. All population data used in this SCORP are taken from the latest available primary source: the U.S. Census 2024 Population Estimates, which were released in July of 2024 for public use.

NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC PARK ACREAGE

Drs. James D. Mertes and James R. Hall co-authored (with editor Roger A. Lancaster) the definitive book on recreation, park, and open-space level of service guidelines in 1983. The book was published by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), and for decades was considered the gold standard for determining the minimum desired acreage of outdoor recreation lands at the local and regional level. This book featured a relatively simple classification system for parks and provided recommended acreages for parks on a population-ratio basis—so many acres of parks per 1,000 people residing in a community.

Here are the most basic level-of-service guidelines, as they were published in 1983:

- **Mini-Park:** Has a service area with less than a quarter-mile radius, and approximately a quarter- to half-acre per 1,000 people.
- **Neighborhood Park:** Has a service area between a quarter-mile and half-mile radius, with population up to 5,000. Has 15-plus acres, equaling 1.0 to 2.0 acres per 1,000 people.
- **Community Park:** Has a service area with a 1- to 2-mile radius (would normally include several neighborhoods), and is 25-plus acres, which equals 5.0 to 8.0 acres per 1,000 people.
- **Regional/Metropolitan Park:** Has a service area of one hour's driving time (would normally include several communities), and is 200-plus acres, which equals 5.0 to 10.0 acres per 1,000 people.
- **Regional Park Preserve:** Has a service area of one hour's driving time (would normally include several communities), and is 1,000-plus acres. A total of 80% of this land would be reserved for natural resource management and conservation, and 20% would be reserved for recreational development. The number of acres per 1,000 people for a regional park preserve would vary widely depending on

the property available.

- **Linear Park, Special-Use Area, or Conservancy Area:** No applicable guidelines were set in the document.

During the next 20 years or so, these guidelines were widely accepted, but even the NRPA noted that the guidelines were meant as a flexible benchmark, not an absolute number. Anyone who has tried on a one-size-fits-all T-shirt knows that “fits all” isn't always true. Academics and park professionals started trying to create a new method of determining how much park and open-space land a given community might need, taking unique local priorities into account. A more locally based and flexible means of determining the minimum number of parks and recreation land or facilities began to emerge in the mid-1990s. Level of Service (LOS) is a process of strategic planning that considers the unique aspects of individual communities. LOS also measures demand for recreation opportunities, current parks and recreation resources, and the needs and preferences of community residents. Indiana has used the 1983 NRPA guidelines as a benchmark since they were first published, but has created its own LOS guidelines for park and recreation open space.

INDIANA'S LOS GUIDELINES FOR PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

To simplify processing of the facilities inventory data, Indiana divides the current supply of recreation acreage into three categories: Local, State/federal/nonprofit and Total (statewide):

- **Local (County, Township, City or Town) recreation acres:** Land owned by municipal, township and county governments, as well as land privately owned but open for public use.
- **State/federal/nonprofit recreation acres:** Mostly land owned by either State or federal governments, as well as some publicly accessible nonprofit Land Trust sites, for public recreational use.
- **Total (Statewide) recreation acres:** Total of all statewide public recreation land that is owned by all the entities in the other two categories.

The State of Indiana took the above categories and created LOS guidelines for publicly owned parks, recreation and open space for all Hoosiers. Indiana's guidelines for outdoor recreation in terms of acres per 1,000 people are:

- **Local LOS:** 20 acres per 1,000 people (.02 acres per person).
- **State/Fed LOS:** 35 acres per 1,000 people (.035 acres per person).
- **Total (Statewide) LOS:** 55 acres per 1,000 people (.055 acres per person).

Because the Indiana SCORP is a document with a focus on statewide, public-owned parks and recreation, these guidelines are on a different scale than the NRPA guidelines mentioned earlier. Indiana’s parks, recreation, and open-space LOS guidelines are set according to the government level owner/operator of public recreation property (such as local, State/federal or total/statewide levels), instead of by types or sizes of park property. All acreages discussed in the SCORP are based on publicly owned or accessed lands. The SCORP acreage data now excludes all schools. This is because many schools do not allow public access to their outdoor facilities; therefore, the DNR has no means to verify true public access to all school properties statewide. Private or commercial for-profit lands not open for public use are also excluded. Tables are included in this chapter that examine the supply of Local, State/federal and Total/statewide owned outdoor-recreation acres, organized and tallied by county and by region. The tables also look at current population (and population growth in the Critical Counties), as well as the best available inventory of public outdoor recreation acres available within each county and region.

LOCAL OUTDOOR RECREATION ACRES LISTED BY COUNTY AND BY REGION: MUNICIPAL, TOWNSHIP, COUNTY, AND PRIVATELY OWNED BUT OPEN FOR PUBLIC USE

As previously mentioned, Indiana uses an LOS guideline (20 acres of locally owned and operated

public outdoor recreation acres per 1,000 people) to determine which local government entities have an adequate supply of acreage or a deficit of small-scale, local-level parks.

Local (owned by a county, township, city, or town) Acres by County

The first data tables in this SCORP provide data on local outdoor recreation acres, tallied by county, to illustrate those counties that may need more assistance in improving their supply of locally owned and managed public outdoor recreation acreage. In the “Difference” column, a bracketed number in red print (X), indicates a negative or deficient number of acres of OR land.

Let’s look at the Indiana Local Acres by County Table listing for Adams County as an example (Figure 3.1). From the left-hand column:

- County ID number (1).
- County Name (Adams).
- 2024 U.S. Census County Population Estimate (36,584 residents).
- DNR-recommended LOS Local Acres of outdoor recreation land (.02 acre * 36,584 people = 731.68 acres recommended).
- Current inventory of local acres of OR land (370.5 acres).
- Recommended number of OR acres—current number of local OR acres = “Difference” (370.5 local acres - 731.68 recommended acres = 361.18-acre deficit of OR acres in Adams County).

Of 92 counties in the state, 77% (71 counties) are deficient in local-level public outdoor-recreation acres.

Figure 3.1 Local Acres Example

County Number	County Name	2024 Population (Estimated)	Recommended Acres; Local 20a/1 000 People	Sum of Local Acres	Difference
1	Adams	36,584	731.68	370.5	(361.18)

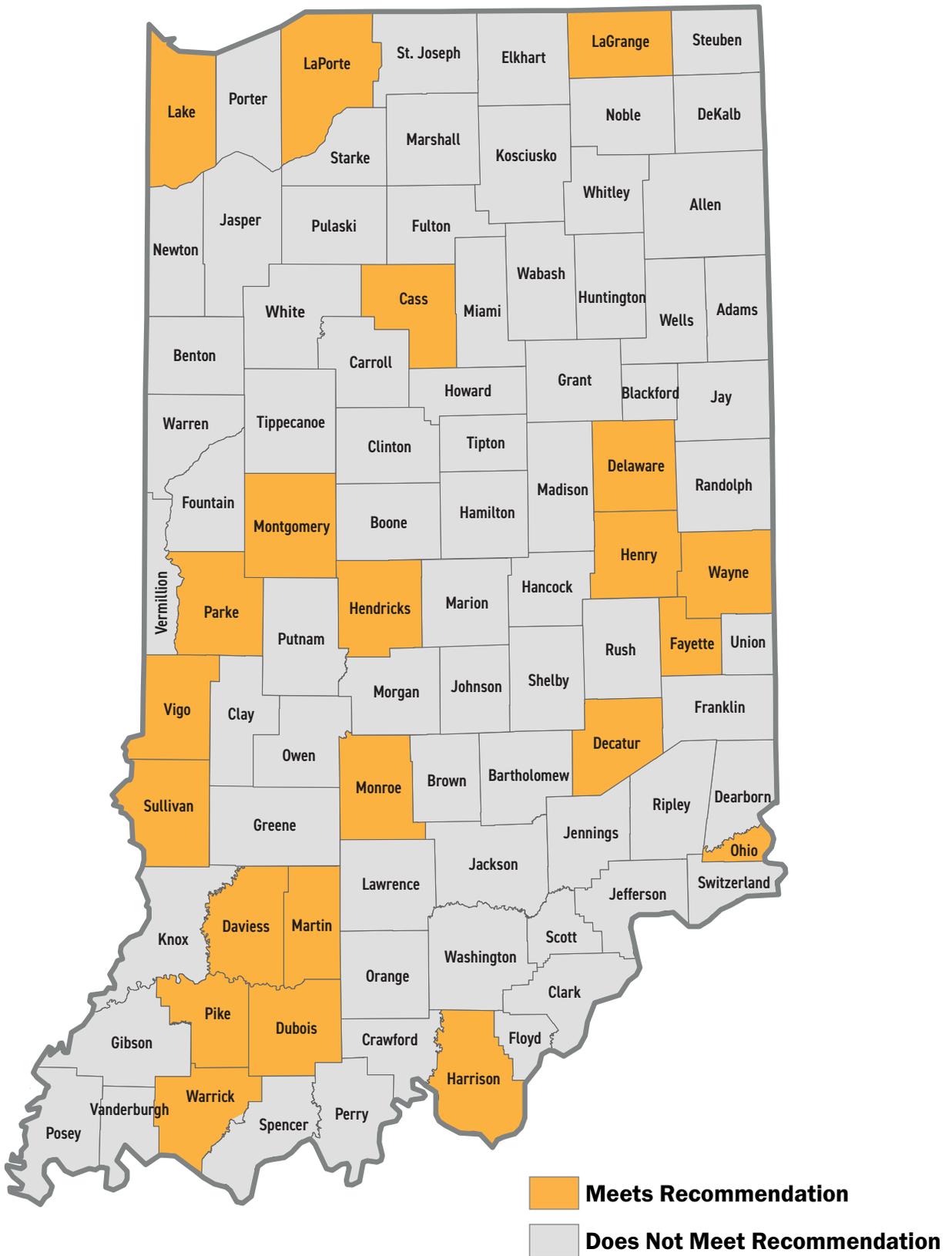
Table 3.1 LOCAL ACRES BY COUNTY

County Number	County Name	2024 (Estimated)	Recommended Acres; Local 20a/1000	Sum of Local Acres	Difference
1	Adams	36,584	731.68	370.5	(361.18)
2	Allen	399,295	7985.90	4356.67	(3629.23)
3	Bartholomew	84,741	1694.82	903.56	(791.26)
4	Benton	8,853	177.06	60.68	(116.38)
5	Blackford	11,816	236.32	146.94	(89.38)
6	Boone	78,773	1575.46	875.84	(699.62)
7	Brown	15,650	313.00	222.1	(90.90)
8	Carroll	20,747	414.94	206.82	(208.12)
9	Cass	37,559	751.18	1123.91	372.73
10	Clark	127,479	2549.58	1223.58	(1326.00)
11	Clay	26,424	528.48	210.35	(318.13)
12	Clinton	32,895	657.90	184.59	(473.31)
13	Crawford	10,523	210.46	28	(182.46)
14	Daviess	34,097	681.94	2770.44	2088.50
15	Dearborn	51,435	1028.70	807.87	(220.83)
16	Decatur	26,421	528.42	217.27	(311.15)
17	Dekalb	44,330	886.60	247.99	(638.61)
18	Delaware	112,951	2259.02	2418.37	159.35
19	Dubois	43,629	872.58	1608.77	736.19
20	Elkhart	207,436	4148.72	2737.69	(1411.03)
21	Fayette	23,335	466.70	909.4	442.70
22	Floyd	81,931	1638.62	821.16	(817.46)
23	Fountain	16,833	336.66	203.75	(132.91)
24	Franklin	23,136	462.72	305.9	(156.82)
25	Fulton	20,004	400.08	195.21	(204.87)
26	Gibson	33,038	660.76	342.75	(318.01)
27	Grant	66,458	1329.16	337.25	(991.91)
28	Greene	31,219	624.38	340	(284.38)
29	Hamilton	379,704	7594.08	4315.15	(3278.93)
30	Hancock	88,810	1776.20	496.18	(1280.02)
31	Harrison	39,978	799.56	885	85.44
32	Hendricks	190,629	3812.58	3893.37	80.79
33	Henry	49,081	981.62	1527.7	546.08
34	Howard	84,082	1681.64	1170.96	(510.68)
35	Huntington	36,944	738.88	250.13	(488.75)
36	Jackson	47,420	948.40	247.95	(700.45)
37	Jasper	33,387	667.74	237.82	(429.92)
38	Jay	20,164	403.28	200.2	(203.08)
39	Jefferson	32,921	658.42	333.15	(325.27)
40	Jennings	27,634	552.68	525	(27.68)
41	Johnson	170,614	3412.28	1662.97	(1749.31)
42	Knox	35,872	717.44	697.45	(19.99)
43	Kosciusko	80,669	1613.38	304.18	(1309.20)
44	LaGrange	41,122	822.44	838.32	15.88
45	Lake	502,955	10059.10	11092.34	1033.24
46	LaPorte	111,348	2226.96	2645.15	418.19
47	Lawrence	45,192	903.84	516.04	(387.80)

County Number	County Name	2024 (Estimated)	Recommended Acres; Local 20a/1000	Sum of Local Acres	Difference
48	Madison	134,222	2684.44	1203.92	(1480.52)
49	Marion	981,628	19632.56	11899.06	(7733.50)
50	Marshall	46,464	929.28	523.74	(405.54)
51	Martin	9,864	197.28	264.6	67.32
52	Miami	35,613	712.26	308.23	(404.03)
53	Monroe	140,702	2814.04	4676.94	1862.90
54	Montgomery	38,633	772.66	923.48	150.82
55	Morgan	73,825	1476.50	526.6	(949.90)
56	Newton	14,131	282.62	133	(149.62)
57	Noble	47,811	956.22	855.56	(100.66)
58	Ohio	5,996	119.92	131.71	11.79
59	Orange	19,824	396.48	184	(212.48)
60	Owen	21,851	437.02	23	(414.02)
61	Parke	16,508	330.16	515.2	185.04
62	Perry	19,320	386.40	263.35	(123.05)
63	Pike	12,116	242.32	427.87	185.55
64	Porter	175,860	3517.20	2882.44	(634.76)
65	Posey	25,067	501.34	210.81	(290.53)
66	Pulaski	12,421	248.42	74.44	(173.98)
67	Putnam	37,804	756.08	175.5	(580.58)
68	Randolph	24,337	486.74	184.25	(302.49)
69	Ripley	29,214	584.28	543.18	(41.10)
70	Rush	16,759	335.18	155.85	(179.33)
71	St. Joseph	273,744	5474.88	3411.46	(2063.42)
72	Scott	24,751	495.02	157.6	(337.42)
73	Shelby	45,654	913.08	386.15	(526.93)
74	Spencer	20,192	403.84	390.77	(13.07)
75	Starke	23,463	469.26	270	(199.26)
76	Steuben	34,862	697.24	420.09	(277.15)
77	Sullivan	20,768	415.36	2619.96	2204.60
78	Switzerland	9,988	199.76	71.61	(128.15)
79	Tippecanoe	191,650	3833.00	2868.86	(964.14)
80	Tipton	15,324	306.48	246.3	(60.18)
81	Union	6,884	137.68	30	(107.68)
82	Vanderburgh	180,387	3607.74	1956.21	(1651.53)
83	Vermillion	15,516	310.32	182.51	(127.81)
84	Vigo	106,166	2123.32	4167.52	2044.20
85	Wabash	30,777	615.54	282.5	(333.04)
86	Warren	8,451	169.02	164.96	(4.06)
87	Warrick	66,339	1326.78	2364.66	1037.88
88	Washington	28,345	566.90	499.4	(67.50)
89	Wayne	66,410	1328.20	1751.8	423.60
90	Wells	28,798	575.96	320.96	(255.00)
91	White	24,833	496.66	185.39	(311.27)
92	Whitley	34,885	697.70	261.8	(435.90)
Statewide Local Acres		6,924,275	138485.50	106113.66	(32371.84)

Figure 3.2

LOCAL OUTDOOR RECREATION ACRES, BY COUNTY



Local (owned by a county, township, city, or town) Acres by Region

A word about “Regions” in this document: Previous authors of the Indiana SCORP, going back decades, have used a number of different ways to divide the state into manageable regions or groups of counties. These regions would share some aspects that gave certain advantages to analyzing them in aggregate. The past several SCORPs have used a regional map first obtained from the Indiana Association of Regional Councils, under the former State of Indiana Department of Planning in the early 1970s. This map divided Indiana into 18 regions, based on groups of counties that had officially banded together in development districts or planning commissions for shared economic development, coordination of urban and regional planning, and intergovernmental cooperation. Since created, the IARC’s member county groups have changed many times, and by

2010 many of the new regional councils bore little resemblance to their old counterparts. This made it time for the DNR to adopt the latest version of IARC’s regions. The latest (as of August 2025) map of the IARC’s member councils shows 16 different regional councils (all with different names), listed in alphabetical order and numbered 1-16. (The old list had several “subdivided” regions, such as 3A and 3B). The current IARC map also makes it clear that a number of counties in the western and southern portions of the state have opted not to participate in any regional planning councils; these counties will be numbered as region 17 on the DNR maps in this SCORP and will be listed as unaffiliated.

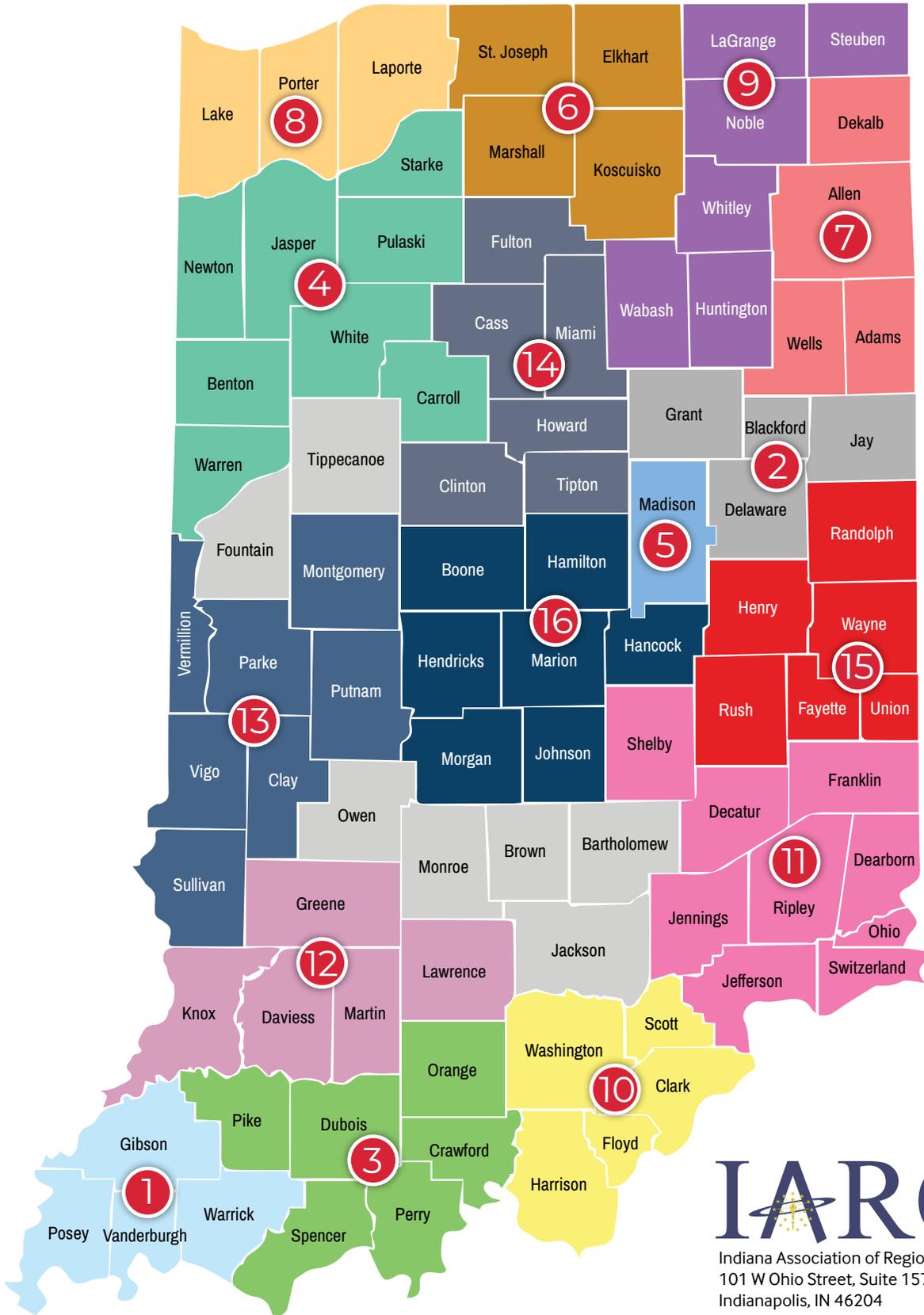
Out of the 16 IARC member regions and 17th unaffiliated group of counties, 12 regions (56%) are deficient in local-level public outdoor-recreation acreage.

Table 3.2 **Local Acres by Region**

Region	2024 Population (Estimated)	Percent of Population Change	Recommended Acres; Local 20a/1000	Sum of Local Acres	Difference
1	304,831	0.74	6096.62	4874.43	(1222.19)
2	211,389	0.25	4227.78	3102.76	(1125.02)
3	125,604	0.27	2512.08	2902.76	390.68
4	146,286	1.07	2925.72	1333.11	(1592.61)
5	134,222	3.12	2684.44	1203.92	(1480.52)
6	608,313	0.39	12166.26	6977.07	(5189.19)
7	509,007	3.15	10180.14	5296.12	(4884.02)
8	790,163	0.71	15803.26	16619.93	816.67
9	226,401	0.91	4528.02	2908.4	(1619.62)
10	302,484	2.82	6049.68	3586.74	(2462.94)
11	252,399	0.79	5047.98	3321.84	(1726.14)
12	156,244	0.64	3124.88	4588.53	1463.65
13	261,819	0.87	5236.38	8794.52	3558.14
14	225,477	(0.37)	4509.54	3229.2	(1280.34)
15	186,806	(0.13)	3736.12	4559	822.88
16	1,963,983	4.09	39279.66	23669.17	(15610.49)
17	518,847	1.93	10376.94	9146.16	(1230.78)
Statewide	6,924,275	1.97	138485.50	106113.66	(32371.84)

Figure 3.3

INDIANA ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS PLANNING REGIONS



Indiana Association of Regional Councils
101 W Ohio Street, Suite 1575
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317.829.3659

1. Evansville Regional Economic Partnership

Patrick Hickey
 318 Main Street, Suite 400,
 Evansville, IN 47708
 P: 812.423.2020 F: 812.423.2080
 phickey@evvregion.com
 www.evansvilleregion.com

2. East Central Indiana Regional Planning District

Bill Walters, Executive Director
 1208 White River Blvd, Ste 127, Muncie, IN 47303
 P: 765.713.7000
 bwalters@ecirpd.org
 www.ecirpd.org

3. Indiana 15 Regional Planning Commission

Nathan Held, Executive Director
 221 E First Street, Ferdinand, IN 47532
 P: 812.367.8455 F: 812.367.8171
 nathan@ind15rpc.org
 www.ind15rpc.org

4. Kankakee - Iroquois Regional Planning Commission

Edwin Buswell, Executive Director
 115 E 4th Street, PO Box 127 Monon, IN 47959
 P: 219.253.6658 F: 219.253.6659
 elb@kirpc.net
 www.kirpc.net

5. Madison County Council of Governments

Jerrold Bridges, Executive Director
 739 Main Street Anderson, IN 46016
 P: 765.641.9482 F: 765.641.9486
 jerry@heartlandmpo.org
 www.mccog.net

6. Michiana Area Council of Governments

James Turnwald, Executive Director
 227 W Jefferson Blvd, 1120 County/City Building
 South Bend, IN 46601
 P: 574.287.1829 F: 574.287.1840
 jturnwald@macog.com - www.macog.com

7. Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council

Dan Avery, Executive Director
 200 E Berry Street, Suite 230
 Ft. Wayne, IN 46802
 P: 260.449.7309 F: 260.449.7682
 Dan.avery@co.allen.in.us
 www.nircc.com

8. Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Ty Warner, Executive Director
 6100 Southport Rd, Portage, IN 46368
 P: 219.763.6060 F: 219.762.1653
 twarner@nirpc.org
 www.nirpc.org

9. Region III-A Economic Development District & Regional Planning Commission

Matt Brinkman, Executive Director
 217 Fairview Blvd, Kendallville, IN 46755
 P: 260.347.4714 F: 260.347.4718
 mbrinkman@region3a.org
 www.region3a.org

10. River Hills Economic Development District & Regional Planning Commission

Corey Cochran, Executive Director
 300 Spring St, Suite 2A, Jeffersonville, IN 47130
 P: 812.288.4624 F: 812.288.8105
 ccochran@riverhills.cc
 www.riverhills.cc

11. Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Mary McCarty, Executive Director
 405 W. US Hwy 50, PO Box 765 Versailles, IN 47042
 P: 812.689.5505 F: 812.689.3526
 mary.mccarty@sirpc.org
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12. Southern Indiana Development Commission

Greg Jones, Executive Director
 PO Box 442, Loogootee, IN 47553
 P: 812.295.3707 F: 812.295.3717
 gejones@sidc.cc
 www.sidc.cc

13. Thrive West Central

Ryan Keller, Executive Director
 2800 Poplar Street Suite 9A
 Terre Haute, IN 47803
 P: 812.238.1561 F: 812.238.1564
 rkeller@westcentralin.com
 www.thrivewestcentralin.com

14. North Central Indiana Regional Planning Council

Steven Ray, Executive Director
 1525 West Hoosier Boulevard, Suite 204
 Peru, IN 46970
 P: 765.689.4026
 sray@ncirpc.com
 www.ncirpc.com

15. Eastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Gertrud Whitaker, Executive Director
 401 East Main Street
 Richmond, IN 47374
 P: 513.325.6351
 gwhitaker@easternindianarpc.org

16. Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization

Anna Gremling, Executive Director
 200 East Washington Street, Suite 2322
 Indianapolis, IN 46204
 P: 317.327.5487 F: 317.327.5950
 info@indympo.org
 www.indympo.org

Total (statewide) Local Acres

Just because local acres of public outdoor recreation land are deficient by both county and region, it does not mean that the total (statewide) level is deficient. Indiana has grown 1.97% in population, to 6,924,275 residents, according to the population projections published by the U.S. Census in 2024. Multiplying the current population by the recommended Local LOS of 20 acres of public outdoor recreation land per 1,000 people (.02 acre per person) equals 138,485.50 acres. Subtracting the current supply of local acres (106,113.66 acres) equals a statewide deficit of local public outdoor recreation land of 32,371.84 acres.

Why Are There Deficits in Locally Owned Public Outdoor Recreation Acres?

There are many reasons why such a high percentage of counties and regions in the state have a deficit in the number of local public outdoor recreation acres. A few possible explanations are:

- Nearby State- or federal-owned properties may provide for significant public recreation needs, causing local governments to perceive that they may not have to supply as many local parks.
- A lack of community resources and support to acquire, develop and/or maintain local outdoor recreation properties.
- Communities in that county/region may lack the capacity, organization or structure—such as park boards and/or park departments—to operate new or existing parks.
- The communities in that county/region may not have enough advocacy among underserved users and user groups to motivate local government leaders to acquire and/or develop sufficient local park land.
- A need for adequate funding for acquisition, development, personnel, operations and maintenance of existing or new public outdoor recreation properties.

STATE/FED OUTDOOR RECREATION ACRES LISTED BY COUNTY AND REGION: STATE AND FEDERAL PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION LAND

The DNR examines the supply of State/federal public outdoor recreation acres (public outdoor recreation acres mostly owned by the State or federal government, as well as some nonprofits) at the same geographic scale as it does local public outdoor recreation acres: by county, region and total (statewide).

State/Federal (State and Federal-owned) Acres by County

The third set of data tables in this SCORP covers State, federal, and certain nonprofit (when open to the public) outdoor recreation acres by county, illustrating those counties that may need more assistance in improving their supply of State and federal public outdoor recreation acreage. In the “Difference” column, a bracketed number in red print (X), indicates a negative or deficient number of acres of outdoor recreation land.

Let’s look at the Indiana State/Federal Acres by County Table listing for Adams County as an example (Figure 3.2). From the left-hand column:

- County ID number (1).
- County Name (Adams).
- 2024 U.S. Census County Population Estimate (36,584 residents).
- DNR-recommended LOS Local Acres of Outdoor-Recreation Land (.035 acre* 36,584 people = 1,280.44 acres recommended).
- Current inventory of State/federal acres of outdoor recreation land (570.42 acres)
- Recommended number of outdoor recreation acres—current number of State/federal outdoor recreation acres = “Difference” (570.42 State/Fed Acres – 1,280.44 Recommended Acres = 710.02 acre deficit of OR acres in Adams County)

Out of 92 counties total in the state, 42% are deficient in State/federal public outdoor recreation

Figure 3.4 State/Fed Acres Example

County Number	County Name	2024 Population (Estimated)	Recommended Acres; State/Fed 35a/1,000 People	Sum Of County State/Fed Acres	Difference
1	Adams	36,584	1280.44	570.42	(710.02)

Table 3.3 **STATE & FEDERAL ACRES BY COUNTY**

County Number	County Name	2024 Population (Estimated)	Recommended Acres; State/Fed 35a/1000	Sum Of County State/Fed Acres	Difference
1	Adams	36,584	1280.44	570.42	(710.02)
2	Allen	399,295	13975.33	1643.5	(12331.83)
3	Bartholomew	84,741	2965.94	1344.2	(1621.74)
4	Benton	8,853	309.86	2268	1958.15
5	Blackford	11,816	413.56	0	(413.56)
6	Boone	78,773	2757.06	38.16	(2718.90)
7	Brown	15,650	547.75	68372	67824.25
8	Carroll	20,747	726.15	313.5	(412.65)
9	Cass	37,559	1314.57	37	(1277.57)
10	Clark	127,479	4461.77	19845.21	15383.45
11	Clay	26,424	924.84	2496	1571.16
12	Clinton	32,895	1151.33	29	(1122.33)
13	Crawford	10,523	368.31	39229.13	38860.83
14	Daviess	34,097	1193.40	9779.01	8585.62
15	Dearborn	51,435	1800.23	817.2	(983.03)
16	Decatur	26,421	924.74	137.08	(787.66)
17	Dekalb	44,330	1551.55	350.4	(1201.15)
18	Delaware	112,951	3953.29	132	(3821.29)
19	Dubois	43,629	1527.02	11850.66	10323.65
20	Elkhart	207,436	7260.26	578.41	(6681.85)
21	Fayette	23,335	816.73	108	(708.73)
22	Floyd	81,931	2867.59	1530	(1337.59)
23	Fountain	16,833	589.16	735.86	146.71
24	Franklin	23,136	809.76	9640.96	8831.20
25	Fulton	20,004	700.14	789.94	89.80
26	Gibson	33,038	1156.33	5681.66	4525.33
27	Grant	66,458	2326.03	1422	(904.03)
28	Greene	31,219	1092.67	17146.05	16053.39
29	Hamilton	379,704	13289.64	23	(13266.64)
30	Hancock	88,810	3108.35	0	(3108.35)
31	Harrison	39,978	1399.23	18947.29	17548.06
32	Hendricks	190,629	6672.02	0	(6672.02)
33	Henry	49,081	1717.84	3912.46	2194.63
34	Howard	84,082	2942.87	86	(2856.87)
35	Huntington	36,944	1293.04	15519	14225.96
36	Jackson	47,420	1659.70	38335.47	36675.77
37	Jasper	33,387	1168.55	6544.1	5375.56
38	Jay	20,164	705.74	614.28	(91.46)
39	Jefferson	32,921	1152.24	19113.52	17961.29
40	Jennings	27,634	967.19	18355.86	17388.67
41	Johnson	170,614	5971.49	4649	(1322.49)
42	Knox	35,872	1255.52	418.52	(837.00)
43	Kosciusko	80,669	2823.42	4669.59	1846.18
44	LaGrange	41,122	1439.27	9870.33	8431.06
45	Lake	502,955	17603.43	5386.47	(12216.96)
46	LaPorte	111,348	3897.18	10460.47	6563.29
47	Lawrence	45,192	1581.72	17356.32	15774.60

County Number	County Name	2024 Population (Estimated)	Recommended Acres; State/Fed 35a/1000	Sum Of County State/Fed Acres	Difference
48	Madison	134,222	4697.77	285	(4412.77)
49	Marion	981,628	34356.98	2213.41	(32143.57)
50	Marshall	46,464	1626.24	1436.85	(189.39)
51	Martin	9,864	345.24	17956.41	17611.17
52	Miami	35,613	1246.46	1481.22	234.77
53	Monroe	140,702	4924.57	41999.6	37075.03
54	Montgomery	38,633	1352.16	1781.77	429.62
55	Morgan	73,825	2583.88	6743.36	4159.49
56	Newton	14,131	494.59	22189.69	21695.11
57	Noble	47,811	1673.39	5986.34	4312.96
58	Ohio	5,996	209.86	22.29	(187.57)
59	Orange	19,824	693.84	47985	47291.16
60	Owen	21,851	764.79	12667.87	11903.09
61	Parke	16,508	577.78	8165.07	7587.29
62	Perry	19,320	676.20	63020.46	62344.26
63	Pike	12,116	424.06	17040.79	16616.73
64	Porter	175,860	6155.10	13437.38	7282.28
65	Posey	25,067	877.35	13617.92	12740.58
66	Pulaski	12,421	434.74	10524.17	10089.44
67	Putnam	37,804	1323.14	8600.65	7277.51
68	Randolph	24,337	851.80	930.72	78.93
69	Ripley	29,214	1022.49	33369	32346.51
70	Rush	16,759	586.57	0	(586.57)
71	St. Joseph	273,744	9581.04	4234.47	(5346.57)
72	Scott	24,751	866.29	10683.2	9816.92
73	Shelby	45,654	1597.89	2	(1595.89)
74	Spencer	20,192	706.72	3728	3021.28
75	Starke	23,463	821.21	3996.74	3175.54
76	Steuben	34,862	1220.17	7028.93	5808.76
77	Sullivan	20,768	726.88	13653.41	12926.53
78	Switzerland	9,988	349.58	1307.39	957.81
79	Tippecanoe	191,650	6707.75	2496.56	(4211.19)
80	Tipton	15,324	536.34	37	(499.34)
81	Union	6,884	240.94	9506.54	9265.60
82	Vanderburgh	180,387	6313.55	632	(5681.55)
83	Vermillion	15,516	543.06	464.02	(79.04)
84	Vigo	106,166	3715.81	480.13	(3235.68)
85	Wabash	30,777	1077.20	15349.55	14272.36
86	Warren	8,451	295.79	332	36.22
87	Warrick	66,339	2321.87	7914.1	5592.24
88	Washington	28,345	992.08	18039.96	17047.89
89	Wayne	66,410	2324.35	637.7	(1686.65)
90	Wells	28,798	1007.93	2667.7	1659.77
91	White	24,833	869.16	623.79	(245.37)
92	Whitley	34,885	1220.98	717.07	(503.91)
Statewide State/Fed Acres		6,924,275	242349.63	807134.26	564784.64

State/Federal Acres (State, Federal and non-profit owned) by Region

Six regions in Indiana (28%) do not meet the DNR recommendations of 35 acres of State/federal/non-profit outdoor recreation acres per 1,000 people. The service-area gaps mentioned at the county level of State/federal/non-profit acres are not as pronounced when viewed at the region level. The scattered nature of State/federal outdoor recreation properties simply doesn't show up as well when viewed at this larger geographic scale. It should be noted that the majority of the regions that are deficient in State/federal acres of public outdoor recreation land are either in the central or northern portions of the state. The large number of State and federally owned public outdoor recreation properties in the southern portion of the state, such as Hoosier National Forest and Morgan-Monroe State Forest, help those areas meet the DNR State/federal/nonprofit LOS recommendations for public OR land when viewed by region.

TOTAL OUTDOOR RECREATION ACRES LISTED BY COUNTY AND REGION: ALL PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION LANDS CURRENTLY RECORDED IN THE DNR FACILITIES INVENTORY

DNR also examines the supply of public outdoor recreation lands in Indiana by tallying the local and State/federal/nonprofit data and looking at them as a total. The total (statewide) LOS for Indiana is created by adding the other two LOS figures: 20 acres/1,000 and 35 acres/1,000, for a total LOS of 55 acres/1,000 people. These totals of all recorded public outdoor recreation acreage will be listed under county-, region- and statewide-level totals in the same way the local and State/federal/nonprofit data were. This provides a snapshot of all public outdoor recreation lands as recorded in the DNR facilities inventory database.

Table 3.4 **State & Federal Acres by Region**

Regions	2020 Population (Estimated)	2024 Population	Percent of Population Change	Recommended Acres; State/Fed 35a/1000	Sum Of State/Fed/ Non-Profit Acres	Difference
1	302,582	304,831	0.74	10669.09	27845.68	17176.60
2	210,854	211,389	0.25	7398.62	2168.28	(5230.34)
3	125,261	125,604	0.27	4396.14	182854.04	178457.90
4	144,741	146,286	1.07	5120.01	46791.99	41671.98
5	130,160	134,222	3.12	4697.77	285	(4412.77)
6	605,931	608,313	0.39	21290.96	10919.32	(10371.64)
7	493,454	509,007	3.15	17815.25	5232.02	(12583.23)
8	784,588	790,163	0.71	27655.71	29284.32	1628.62
9	224,356	226,401	0.91	7924.04	54471.22	46547.19
10	294,174	302,484	2.82	10586.94	69045.66	58458.72
11	250,421	252,399	0.79	8833.97	82765.3	73931.34
12	155,249	156,244	0.64	5468.54	62656.31	57187.77
13	259,571	261,819	0.87	9163.67	35641.05	26477.39
14	226,315	225,477	(0.37)	7891.70	2460.16	(5431.54)
15	187,043	186,806	(0.13)	6538.21	15095.42	8557.21
16	1,886,770	1,963,983	4.09	68739.41	13666.93	(55072.48)
17	509,027	518,847	1.93	18159.65	165951.56	147791.92
Totals:	6,790,497	6,924,275	1.97	242349.63	807134.26	564784.64

Total (statewide) Acres by County

A total of 50 counties in Indiana meet DNR's recommended total LOS of 55 acres of public OR land per 1,000 people. That is three fewer counties meeting the Total LOS (when tallied by county) than during the last SCORP cycle.

Of the 50 counties that meet the total LOS recommendation, 13 counties (14% of all Indiana counties) actually meet all three LOS recommendations—Local, State/federal/nonprofit and Total (statewide):

- Daviess
- Dubois
- Harrison
- Henry
- LaGrange
- LaPorte
- Martin
- Monroe
- Montgomery
- Parke
- Pike
- Sullivan
- Warrick

Of the 42 counties that do not meet the total LOS recommendation, 31 (34% of all Indiana counties) are deficient in all three LOS recommendations—Local, State/federal and Total (statewide):

- Adams
- Allen
- Bartholomew
- Blackford
- Boone
- Carroll
- Clinton
- Dearborn
- Decatur
- Dekalb
- Elkhart
- Floyd
- Grant
- Hamilton
- Hancock
- Howard
- Jay
- Johnson
- Knox
- Madison
- Marion
- Marshall
- Rush
- St. Joseph
- Shelby
- Tippecanoe
- Tipton
- Vanderburgh
- Vermillion
- White
- Whitley



Table 3.5 **TOTAL ACRES BY COUNTY**

County Number	County Name	2018 Population (Estimated)	Recommended Acres; Total 35a/1000	Sum Of County Total Acres	Difference
1	Adams	36,584	2012.12	940.92	(1071.20)
2	Allen	399,295	21961.23	6000.17	(15961.06)
3	Bartholomew	84,741	4660.76	2247.76	(2413.00)
4	Benton	8,853	486.92	2328.68	1841.77
5	Blackford	11,816	649.88	146.94	(502.94)
6	Boone	78,773	4332.52	914	(3418.52)
7	Brown	15,650	860.75	68594.1	67733.35
8	Carroll	20,747	1141.09	520.32	(620.77)
9	Cass	37,559	2065.75	1160.91	(904.84)
10	Clark	127,479	7011.35	21068.79	14057.45
11	Clay	26,424	1453.32	2706.35	1253.03
12	Clinton	32,895	1809.23	213.59	(1595.64)
13	Crawford	10,523	578.77	39257.13	38678.37
14	Daviess	34,097	1875.34	12549.45	10674.12
15	Dearborn	51,435	2828.93	1625.07	(1203.86)
16	Decatur	26,421	1453.16	354.35	(1098.81)
17	Dekalb	44,330	2438.15	598.39	(1839.76)
18	Delaware	112,951	6212.31	2550.37	(3661.94)
19	Dubois	43,629	2399.60	13459.43	11059.84
20	Elkhart	207,436	11408.98	3316.1	(8092.88)
21	Fayette	23,335	1283.43	1017.4	(266.03)
22	Floyd	81,931	4506.21	2351.16	(2155.05)
23	Fountain	16,833	925.82	939.61	13.80
24	Franklin	23,136	1272.48	9946.86	8674.38
25	Fulton	20,004	1100.22	985.15	(115.07)
26	Gibson	33,038	1817.09	6024.41	4207.32
27	Grant	66,458	3655.19	1759.25	(1895.94)
28	Greene	31,219	1717.05	17486.05	15769.01
29	Hamilton	379,704	20883.72	4338.15	(16545.57)
30	Hancock	88,810	4884.55	496.18	(4388.37)
31	Harrison	39,978	2198.79	19832.29	17633.50
32	Hendricks	190,629	10484.60	3893.37	(6591.23)
33	Henry	49,081	2699.46	5440.16	2740.71
34	Howard	84,082	4624.51	1256.96	(3367.55)
35	Huntington	36,944	2031.92	15769.13	13737.21
36	Jackson	47,420	2608.10	38583.42	35975.32
37	Jasper	33,387	1836.29	6781.92	4945.64
38	Jay	20,164	1109.02	814.48	(294.54)
39	Jefferson	32,921	1810.66	19446.67	17636.02
40	Jennings	27,634	1519.87	18880.86	17360.99
41	Johnson	170,614	9383.77	6311.97	(3071.80)
42	Knox	35,872	1972.96	1115.97	(856.99)
43	Kosciusko	80,669	4436.80	4973.77	536.98
44	LaGrange	41,122	2261.71	10708.65	8446.94
45	Lake	502,955	27662.53	16478.81	(11183.72)
46	LaPorte	111,348	6124.14	13105.62	6981.48
47	Lawrence	45,192	2485.56	17872.36	15386.80

County Number	County Name	2018 Population (Estimated)	Recommended Acres; Total 35a/1000	Sum Of County Total Acres	Difference
48	Madison	134,222	7382.21	1488.92	(5893.29)
49	Marion	981,628	53989.54	14112.47	(39877.07)
50	Marshall	46,464	2555.52	1960.59	(594.93)
51	Martin	9,864	542.52	18221.01	17678.49
52	Miami	35,613	1958.72	1789.45	(169.27)
53	Monroe	140,702	7738.61	46676.54	38937.93
54	Montgomery	38,633	2124.82	2705.25	580.44
55	Morgan	73,825	4060.38	7269.96	3209.59
56	Newton	14,131	777.21	22322.69	21545.49
57	Noble	47,811	2629.61	6841.9	4212.30
58	Ohio	5,996	329.78	154	(175.78)
59	Orange	19,824	1090.32	48169	47078.68
60	Owen	21,851	1201.81	12690.87	11489.07
61	Parke	16,508	907.94	8680.27	7772.33
62	Perry	19,320	1062.60	63283.81	62221.21
63	Pike	12,116	666.38	17468.66	16802.28
64	Porter	175,860	9672.30	16319.82	6647.52
65	Posey	25,067	1378.69	13828.73	12450.05
66	Pulaski	12,421	683.16	10598.61	9915.46
67	Putnam	37,804	2079.22	8776.15	6696.93
68	Randolph	24,337	1338.54	1114.97	(223.57)
69	Ripley	29,214	1606.77	33912.18	32305.41
70	Rush	16,759	921.75	155.85	(765.90)
71	St. Joseph	273,744	15055.92	7645.93	(7409.99)
72	Scott	24,751	1361.31	10840.8	9479.50
73	Shelby	45,654	2510.97	388.15	(2122.82)
74	Spencer	20,192	1110.56	4118.77	3008.21
75	Starke	23,463	1290.47	4266.74	2976.28
76	Steuben	34,862	1917.41	7449.02	5531.61
77	Sullivan	20,768	1142.24	16273.37	15131.13
78	Switzerland	9,988	549.34	1379	829.66
79	Tippecanoe	191,650	10540.75	5365.42	(5175.33)
80	Tipton	15,324	842.82	283.3	(559.52)
81	Union	6,884	378.62	9536.54	9157.92
82	Vanderburgh	180,387	9921.29	2588.21	(7333.08)
83	Vermillion	15,516	853.38	646.53	(206.85)
84	Vigo	106,166	5839.13	4647.65	(1191.48)
85	Wabash	30,777	1692.74	15632.05	13939.32
86	Warren	8,451	464.81	496.96	32.16
87	Warrick	66,339	3648.65	10278.76	6630.12
88	Washington	28,345	1558.98	18539.36	16980.39
89	Wayne	66,410	3652.55	2389.5	(1263.05)
90	Wells	28,798	1583.89	2988.66	1404.77
91	White	24,833	1365.82	809.18	(556.64)
92	Whitley	34,885	1918.68	978.87	(939.81)
Statewide Total Acres		6,924,275	380,835.13	913,247.92	532,412.80

Figure 3.6

TOTAL RECREATION ACRES, BY COUNTY



Total (statewide) Acres by Region

Eleven regions in Indiana meet DNR's recommended total LOS of 55 acres of public outdoor recreation land per 1,000 people. This statistic decreased by one region since the last SCORP cycle. The six regions deficient in total outdoor recreation acreage (35% of all Indiana regions) are the same as recorded in the current State/federal acreage tables, tallied by region. Given the size of many of the State/federal parcels, as noted earlier, the State/federal property effect carries over into the total data.

Of the 11 regions that meet the total LOS recommendation, five regions (29% of all Indiana regions) actually meet all three LOS recommendations—Local, State/federal and Total (statewide):

- Indiana 15 Regional Planning District (Region 3).
- Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (Region 8).
- Southern Indiana Development Commission (Region 12).

- West-Central Indiana Economic Development District (Region 13).
- Eastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (Region 15).

The six regions that do not meet the total LOS recommendation (35% of all Indiana regions) are actually deficient in all three LOS recommendations—Local, State/federal and Total (Statewide):

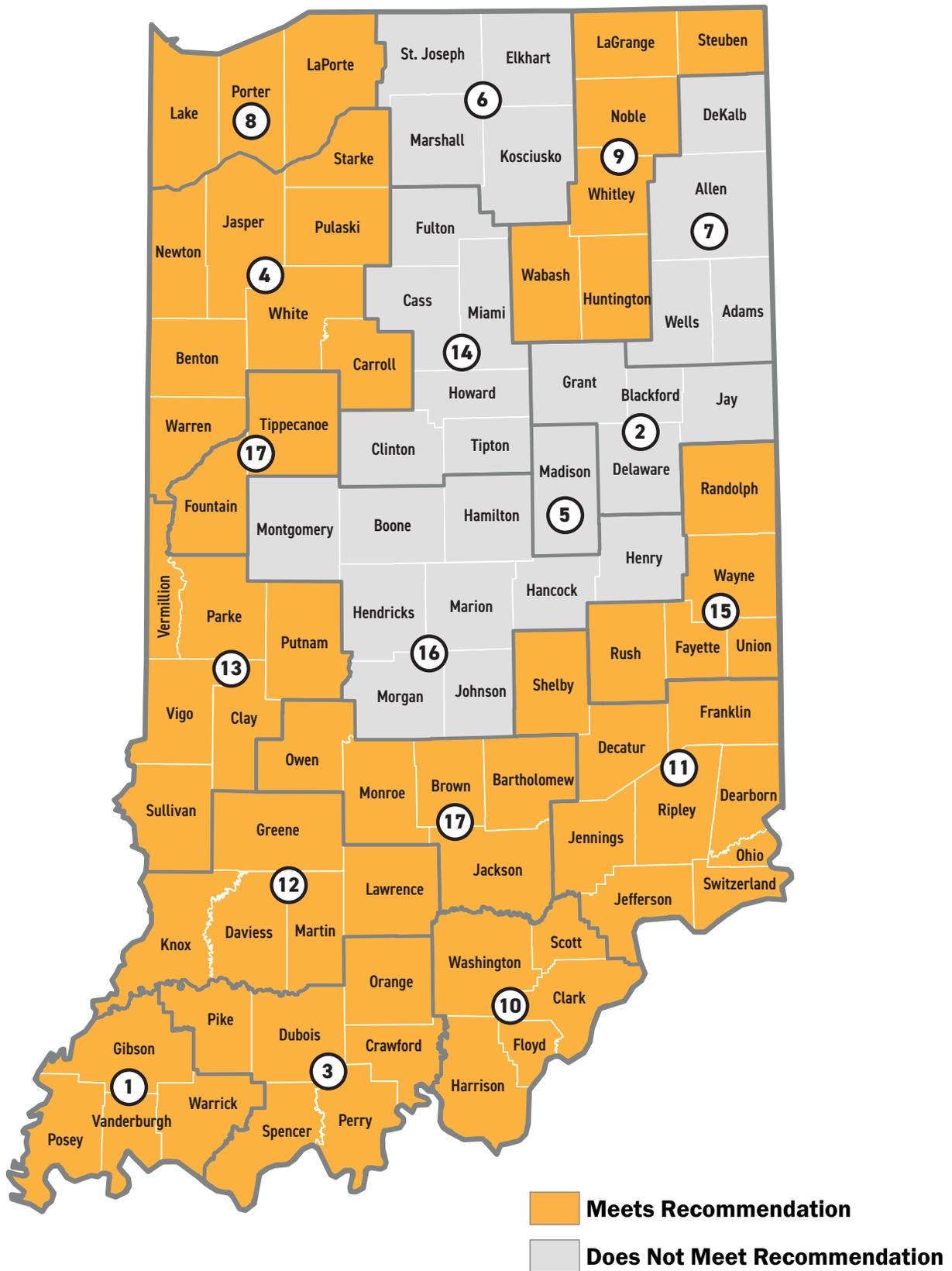
- Energize-ECI Regional Planning District (Region 2).
- Madison County Council of Governments (Region 5).
- Michiana Area Council of Governments (Region 6).
- Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (Region 7).
- North Central Indiana Regional Planning Council (Region 14).
- Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (Region 16).

Table 3.6 Total Acres by Region

Regions	2020 Population (Estimated)	2024 Population	Percent of Population Change	Recommended Acres; Total 55a/1000	Sum of Total Acres	Total Difference
1	302,582	304,831	0.74	16765.71	32720.11	15954.41
2	210,854	211,389	0.25	11626.40	5271.04	(6355.36)
3	125,261	125,604	0.27	6908.22	185756.8	178848.58
4	144,741	146,286	1.07	8045.73	48125.1	40079.37
5	130,160	134,222	3.12	7382.21	1488.92	(5893.29)
6	605,931	608,313	0.39	33457.22	17896.39	(15560.83)
7	493,454	509,007	3.15	27995.39	10528.14	(17467.25)
8	784,588	790,163	0.71	43458.97	45904.25	2445.29
9	224,356	226,401	0.91	12452.06	57379.62	44927.57
10	294,174	302,484	2.82	16636.62	72632.4	55995.78
11	250,421	252,399	0.79	13881.95	86087.14	72205.20
12	155,249	156,244	0.64	8593.42	67244.84	58651.42
13	259,571	261,819	0.87	14400.05	44435.57	30035.53
14	226,315	225,477	(0.37)	12401.24	5689.36	(6711.88)
15	187,043	186,806	(0.13)	10274.33	19654.42	9380.09
16	1,886,770	1,963,983	4.09	108019.07	37336.1	(70682.97)
17	509,027	518,847	1.93	28536.59	175097.72	146561.14
Totals:	6,790,497	6,924,275	1.97	380835.18	913247.92	532412.74

Figure 3.7

TOTAL ACRES BY REGION



Total (statewide) Outdoor-Recreation Acres

As noted elsewhere in the SCORP, Indiana has grown 1.97% in population, to 6,924,275 residents, according to the population estimates published by the U.S. Census in 2024. Multiplying the current population by the recommended Total (statewide) LOS of 55 acres of public outdoor recreation land per 1,000 people (.055 acre per person), yields a total of 380,835.13 acres. Subtracting the Total (statewide) Recommended LOS acres (380,835.13) from the current supply of Total (statewide) public outdoor recreation acres (913,247.92) yields a statewide surplus of total public outdoor recreation land of 532,412.80 acres.

Conclusion of Total Outdoor Recreation Acres

Indiana now ranks 17th in the country in total population as of the 2024 U.S. Census population estimates. That ranking is the same as in 2018 and is two lower than in 2010. Indiana has gained population since 2010, but not as fast as some other states. The total state acreage of Indiana is 23,307,520. Of that total, 913,247.92 acres are designated for outdoor recreation. Indiana therefore has only 3.92% of its land area available for public outdoor recreation.

One observation that cannot be avoided is the continuing difference between counties and regions that have reported surpluses of public outdoor recreation land, and those that have deficits. There are still significant gaps between the haves and have-nots for outdoor recreation acreage in Indiana. As noted earlier, the southern portion of the state tends to have more counties that meet the total LOS guidelines than the northern tier. And when population distribution and service areas are considered, these differ-

ences grow. It was noted in the last four SCORPs that there was an apparent inequity in the distribution of public outdoor recreation acreage statewide. That still has not significantly changed for this SCORP.

CRITICAL COUNTIES

The definition of “critical county” in Indiana has changed again for this SCORP. That is because the state’s population-growth rate has increased since the last SCORP. A critical county is defined as:

1. A county that does not have the recommended supply of outdoor-recreation acres of 55 acres per 1,000 population or greater.
2. A population-growth rate higher than the 2020 to 2024 estimated Indiana statewide population growth rate of 1.97% (data obtained from the U.S. Census 2020 and 2024 population estimates).

12 counties meet the critical counties criteria:

- Adams
- Carroll
- Hendricks
- Allen
- DeKalb
- Johnson
- Bartholomew
- Hamilton
- Madison
- Boone
- Hancock
- Tippecanoe

If the critical counties criteria used only the supply of local acres of outdoor-recreation land (at 20 acres/1,000 population), the list above would change significantly (up to 20):

- Adams
- Fountain
- Newton
- Allen
- Hamilton
- Owen
- Bartholomew
- Hancock
- Putnam
- Boone
- Jackson
- Switzerland
- Carroll
- Johnson
- Tippecanoe
- Clark
- Madison
- Wells
- DeKalb
- Morgan

Figure 3.8

CRITICAL COUNTIES BASED ON TOTAL ACRES



Table 3.7 Critical Counties Based On Total Acres

County Number	County Name	2024 Population	Recommended Acres; Total 55a/1000	Sum of County Total Acres	Difference
1	Adams	36,584	2012.12	940.92	(1071.20)
2	Allen	399,295	21961.23	6000.17	(15961.06)
3	Bartholomew	84,741	4660.76	2247.76	(2413.00)
6	Boone	78,773	4332.52	914	(3418.52)
8	Carroll	20,747	1141.09	520.32	(620.77)
17	Dekalb	44,330	2438.15	598.39	(1839.76)
29	Hamilton	379,704	20883.72	4338.15	(16545.57)
30	Hancock	88,810	4884.55	496.18	(4388.37)
32	Hendricks	190,629	10484.60	3893.37	(6591.23)
41	Johnson	170,614	9383.77	6311.97	(3071.80)
48	Madison	134,222	7382.21	1488.92	(5893.29)
79	Tippecanoe	191,650	10540.75	5365.42	(5175.33)



CHAPTER 4

Supply of Wetlands in Indiana

Chapter four examines the supply and types of wetlands in Indiana. Due to their rarity and threatened habitat status, wetlands are a priority of acquisition for outdoor recreation purposes, via the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant program. After decades of removal, neglect, drainage, development and destruction, wetland habitats have slowly undergone resurgence nationwide.

Each SCORP in the nation is required to have a chapter specifically addressing many aspects of wetlands: existing federal and State programs and initiatives, supply, types of wetlands commonly found in the state, and methods currently being undertaken to restore or conserve them. The information shared here is the latest available from these programs

Definition and Traits (from the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act)

There are many definitions of wetlands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service uses the most commonly accepted scientific definition. In 1979, Cowardin, Carter, Golet and LaRoe published “Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States.” This document was adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as its standard for wetlands classification. It defines wetlands as “... lands transitional between

terrestrial and aquatic systems, where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water.” Wetlands in this standard must also have one or more of the following traits:

1. The vegetation of the site sometimes consists mainly of aquatic plants.
2. The underlying materials are mostly undrained, moist (wetland) soils.
3. The underlying materials are not actually soils and are saturated with water or covered by water at some point during the growing season of each year (examples include peat, sand, or muck).

This definition and set of traits are used in some form by most state agencies that have the authority to create wetland conservation initiatives. The State of Indiana uses them in an almost identical form.

INDIANA WETLANDS LEGISLATION, INITIATIVES, AND RESOURCES

Section 303 of the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act (EWRA) of 1986, (16 U.S.C. Sections 3901-3932, Nov. 10, 1986, as amended 1988 and 1992) requires all SCORPs to: “... address wetlands within that State as an important outdoor recreation resource ...” as part of the National Park Service SCORP review and approval process.

The Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan

In 1996, the Indiana DNR created the “Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan” (IWCP) as required by, and consistent with, the EWRA’s National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan. The IWCP contains much information about wetlands in Indiana and sets priorities for their identification and conservation. To view or download the IWCP, go to: IN.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/about-us/indiana-wetlands-conservation-plan/.

Many of the wetlands conservation efforts in Indiana have begun shifting to similar programs and staff within the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. Its contact information is:

IDEM - Watershed Planning Branch
Wetlands, Lakes, and Streams Regulation
100 North Senate Avenue
MC65-42, WQS IGCN 1255
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-233-8488

Hoosier Wetlands Conservation Initiative (HWCI)

The IWCP created the Hoosier Wetlands Conservation Initiative (HWCI) as the action component of the plan. The HWCI uses six tactics for conserving wetlands in Indiana:

1. Implementing the IWCP through local wetland conservation partnerships.
2. Obtaining scientific information about Indiana’s wetland resources, with an emphasis on making conservation techniques effective and cost-efficient.
3. Providing positive incentives to motivate conservation and restoration of wetlands.
4. Providing educational opportunities for educational staff, landowners, schoolchildren, and other audiences to enhance community understanding of the functions and benefits of wetlands.
5. Acquisition (from willing owners) for the purpose of permanently protecting the highest priority wetlands.
6. Continuing the work of the IWCP’s Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team as cooperative partners, led by the DNR.

IWCP wetland conservation priorities

The IWCP separates the priorities for wetland conservation into two types:

1. Water quality, flood control, and groundwater benefits.
2. Biological and ecological functions.

Priorities based on water quality, flood control and groundwater benefits are recommended to be made on the watershed or sub-watershed level. Criteria for identifying priorities based on these three aspects are given in Appendix E of the IWCP, while Appendix F of the IWCP has descriptions of the water management basins and watersheds of Indiana. According to the IWCP, priorities based on biological or ecological functions should be developed from these criteria:

- Rarity of wetland type
- Presence of endangered, threatened or rare species
- Presence of endangered, threatened or rare species habitat, but species not yet identified at the site
- Diversity of native species
- Proximity of other valued ecosystem types
- Natural quality (amount/degree of disturbance or degradation).
- “Irreplaceability” (Can the wetland type be re-created?)
- “Recoverability” (Can the wetland type recover from disturbance it has experienced?)
- Size
- Location

The IWCP also states that these priorities should be identified based on the natural regions used by the Indiana DNR and other agencies and organizations. Appendix F of the IWCP identifies natural regions and wetland ecology found in each watershed. Appendix G of the IWCP describes wetland ecological communities. Recreation and historical benefits of wetlands are also mentioned in the IWCP as items to be considered when identifying priorities. Planners trying to create priorities for wetlands conservation in their area are highly encouraged to use the IWCP as a primary guidance document. The entire text of the IWCP is available for free download at: IN.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/about-us/indiana-wetlands-conservation-plan/

DNR and IDEM’s most recent wetland-related publication is the “Indiana Wetland Program Plan,”

published in March of 2015. This nonbinding, non-regulatory plan is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s “Enhancing State and Tribal Wetland Programs (ESTP) Initiative.” This voluntary plan was intended to act as a guide to wetland stakeholders statewide and offers public-input-informed goals to conserve and protect Indiana’s remaining wetlands.

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and the Wetland Reserve Easements Program (WRE)

One of the largest wetlands conservation efforts in the state is the USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service Indiana Wetlands Reserve Easements Program (WRE). Indiana began participating in the program in 2014, after passage of the 2014 Farm Bill consolidated three former programs (Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program and Ranch Lands Reserve Program) into the new Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The ACEP is a voluntary landowner-participation program that encourages protection, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands on private property.

The Indiana NRCS ACEP 2025 website describes the benefits of the WRE program.

“Wetlands Reserve Easements component of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program provides habitat for migratory waterfowl and other wetland dependent wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduces flooding, recharges groundwater, protects biological diversity and provides opportunities for educational, scientific and limited recreational activities.”

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/wetland-reserve-easements

Healthy Rivers Initiative

In June 2010, the governor announced the Healthy Rivers Initiative (HRI), the largest land conservation initiative to be undertaken in Indiana. The initiative included a partnership of resource agencies and organizations who worked with willing landowners to permanently protect 28,906 acres located in the floodplain of the Wabash River and Sugar Creek

in west-central Indiana, as well as another 8,942 acres of the Muscatatuck River bottomlands in southeast Indiana. Through HRI, Indiana has permanently protected 37,848 acres of wetlands across the state. These projects involved protection, restoration and enhancement of riparian and aquatic habitats and the species that use them, particularly threatened or endangered migratory birds and waterfowl. This initiative also benefited the public and surrounding communities by providing flood protection to riparian landowners, increasing public access to recreational opportunities (such as hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, boating, and bird watching), leaving a legacy for future generations and providing a major conservation destination for tourists.

Eight key objectives had been identified for HRI:

- Design an effective model for sustainability of natural resources.
- Connect fragmented parcels of public land on a broad scale to benefit wildlife diversity.
- Restore and enhance riparian habitat, including wetlands and bottomland hardwood forests.
- Protect essential habitat for threatened and endangered species.
- Open public access for recreational opportunities (fishing, hunting, trapping, hiking, canoeing, bird watching and boating).
- Preserve significant rest areas for migratory birds, especially waterfowl.
- Create a regionally significant conservation destination.
- Provide additional flood relief to current riparian landowners.

More details on the Healthy Rivers Initiative can be found at: IN.gov/dnr/healthy-rivers/project-info/accomplishments/

Benefits of Wetlands to Indiana’s residents (from the IWCP)

For many reasons, it is vitally important for Indiana to conserve and restore wetlands whenever possible. Wetlands offer a significant set of financial, ecological, and recreational benefits to Hoosiers, including:

- Flood control – Wetlands can store large amounts of storm runoff, as seen with the constructed wetlands and settling ponds at Miller-Showers Park in Bloomington.

- Groundwater inlet and outlet – Aquifers can receive and expel water through wetlands as needed, such as the recharge taking place in Celery Bog Park in West Lafayette.
- Improved water quality – Wetlands can act as a biological filter for pollutants such as fertilizers, animal wastes, road runoff, sediments, pesticides and more; water filtered by wetlands costs less to treat and use as drinking water. This filtration process is used to treat acid coal mine drainage at the DNR's Interlake Off-road State Recreation Area in Pike and Warrick counties.
- Sewage disposal – Constructed wetlands are being used as highly effective disposal methods for treated sewage from livestock farms and municipal wastewater. Constructed wetlands are being used for treated sewage disposal at The Farm at Prophetstown and Prophetstown State Park in Tippecanoe County.
- Fish and wildlife habitat – Wetlands are one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in Indiana. Many fish and wildlife species depend on wetlands for some or all of their food, shelter and water needs. Many species of plants also require the conditions found in wetlands to survive. Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area near Linton is being restored as a diverse wetland by a consortium of partners, including the DNR, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and others. One reason for this project is to re-establish historically diverse plant and animal communities.
- Soil stabilization – Wetlands slow erosion by slowing the movement of water through a watershed and by holding down soil (especially on shorelines) with extensive aquatic root systems. IDEM has approved several projects on private property that use wetlands as part of a larger soil stabilization project.
- Food – Wetlands are an important source of food for both wildlife and humans, providing habitat for edible plants, fish, shellfish, waterfowl, deer and other animals.
- Timber production – If managed carefully, valuable timber and forest products can be harvested from wetlands in a sustainable manner without harming the resource.
- Fun – Wetland areas can be used for many popular forms of outdoor recreation such as canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, nature photography, bird watching, swimming, boating and sightseeing. Pisgah Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Kosciusko County is an example of a multiple-use DNR area that actively supports many types of outdoor recreation.



INDIANA WETLANDS ACREAGE

As of the creation date of the 2026-2030 SCORP, there is not a current inventory count of wetlands acres in Indiana. The current best available dataset for Indiana wetlands acres was created in 1991, by R.E. Rolley, as part of the DNR “Indiana’s Wetland Inventory” project. According to the 1996 IWCP, the most recent analysis of the acreage of wetlands in Indiana by habitat type was the 1991 Rolley dataset. At the time, Indiana had approximately 813,000 acres of wetlands, divided into seven basic types (see Table 4.1 “Rolley Data Table”).

For comparison, it has been estimated that in the 1780s, as the first settlers arrived, Indiana had approximately 5.6 million acres of wetlands. This indicates Indiana has lost approximately 85% of its wetlands to agriculture, roads, community development, pollution, vegetation clearing, and other land uses. There have been some significant additions to the State’s wetlands portfolio since 1991. The 8,064-acre Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area and more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of fen at Prophetstown State Park in Tippecanoe County are two examples. If the acreage from HRI is added to these examples, along with other new piecemeal wetland acreage statewide, gains in the total wetland inventory in Indiana are likely, but not yet provable with expert-verified data on a statewide basis.

Table 4.1 **Indiana Wetland Acres (Rolley, R.E., 1991)**

Wetlands Habitats	Acres	% of Total
Scrub-Shrub	42,131	5.2
Forested	504,336	62.0
Wet Meadow	55,071	6.8
Shallow Marsh	67,564	8.3
Deep Marsh	20,730	2.5
Open Water	98,565	12.1
Other	24,633	3.0
Total	813,032	100

RECENT INDIANA WETLANDS-RELATED LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

In April of 2021, the governor signed Public Law 160 (formerly 2021 Senate Bill 389) into law. According to the Indiana General Assembly 2021 Session, this law “Amends the law requiring a permit and compensatory mitigation for “wetland activity” (the discharge of dredged or fill material) in a state regulated wetland: (1) by changing the definition of “Class II wetland”; (2) by providing that wetland activity may be conducted without a permit: (A) in a Class I wetland; (B) in a Class II wetland with an area of not more than three-eighths acre; (C) in an ephemeral stream; and (D) in a Class II wetland that is located within the boundaries of a municipality and has an area of not more than three-fourths acre; (3) by providing that a permit is not needed for the development of cropland that has been used for agricultural purposes: (A) in the five years immediately preceding the development; or (B) in the 10 years immediately preceding the development if the United States Army Corps of Engineers has issued a jurisdictional determination confirming that the cropland does not contain wetlands subject to federal jurisdiction; (4) by providing that wetland activity in a Class II wetland with an area of more than three-eighths acre requires an individual permit; (5) by providing that: (A) maintenance of a field tile in a Class II wetland can be conducted with a general permit if certain conditions are met; and (B) maintenance of a field tile in a Class III wetland can be conducted with a general permit if certain conditions are met and the applicant obtains a site-specific approval; (6) by establishing conditions for obtaining a site-specific approval; (7) by eliminating the compensatory mitigation requirements for wetland activity in a Class I wetland; and (8) by requiring the department of environmental management (department) to make a decision to issue or deny an individual permit for wetland activity not later than 90 days (instead of 120 days) after receiving the completed application. Amends the law concerning a certification under Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act for dredge and fill activity in a federally regulated wetland to require the department to make a final determination not later than 90 days (instead of 120 days) after receiving a completed application if the applicant requests a pre-coordination meeting. Establishes the Indiana wetlands task force, a 14

member body that: (1) is required to study and make recommendations concerning a number of wetlands issues; and (2) not later than November 1, 2022, issue a report to the general assembly and the governor setting forth its recommendations. Requires the department of natural resources to provide staff support to the task force.”

The full text of the law and details can be found here: iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/senate/389/details

The Indiana Wetlands Task Force, created under Public Law 160, unanimously voted to approve its final report at its final meeting on September 14, 2022. According to the report: “The Indiana Wetlands Task Force met a total of five times in 2022 with broad participation by the task force members as well as strong

public participation. Each meeting was held live at Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park and was available for observation via Zoom. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) provided technical support for each meeting. The report details each of these meetings, the presenters invited, and the findings and recommendations in each of the areas the task force was charged with. All presentations as well as meeting minutes are available upon request as noted in the Appendix...” “...The charges handed down via Senate Enrolled Act 389 are addressed in the Legislative Directives. Task force members opted to prioritize four areas that are a blend of these directives and reflect the most critical charges identified via members. The priority areas as voted on and established by the task force members are as follows:



(1) Review existing state isolated permitting processes including wetland classifications and mitigation ratios and recommend improvements, efficiencies, and alignment with the United States Army Corps of Engineers. (2) Strategies to incentivize the avoidance of isolated wetland impacts during development. (3) Strategies to incentivize the preservation of existing isolated wetlands and the voluntary restoration and creation of wetlands to offset historical losses and replace functions and values. (4) Review the current Indiana Stream and Wetland Mitigation Program (In Lieu Fee) compensatory mitigation program and make recommendations on how to reduce the costs and improve the effectiveness of the program.”

The full text of the report may be found at: iga.in.gov/publications/agency_report/

[2022-indiana-wetlands-task-force-final-report.pdf](#)

In February of 2024, the governor signed Public Law 1 (formerly 2024 House Bill 1383) into law. According to the Indiana General Assembly 2024 Session, this law “Clarifies various wetland definitions. Eliminates certain wetland rulemaking requirements. Provides that certain wetland activity requires state authorization. Clarifies the compensatory mitigation that must be offered to offset certain wetland activity. Makes conforming changes and technical corrections.”

The full text of the law and details can be found here: iga.in.gov/legislative/2024/bills/house/1383/details





CHAPTER 5

Accessibility and Outdoor Recreation

This chapter addresses some of the common challenges and issues park professionals and other interested people face when trying to make their programs, services, and activities accessible to people with disabilities. Included is information about the requirements involved, pertinent legislation, guidelines to follow, and even potential resources to help succeed in the effort.

WHO BENEFITS FROM ACCESSIBILITY?

There are few recreational programs that have not felt the challenge of doing more with less. Fewer financial resources, fewer personnel, less time ... It might be tempting to argue that accessibility costs too much. Have you thought about the cost of not providing access to people and not just “people with disabilities?”

Accessibility benefits many with disabilities, but there is a significant number of people who end up being helped who are not technically “disabled.” For example, a ramp benefits the:

- Family with large, heavy gear and folding chairs
- Person pushing a child in a stroller
- Older person with bad knees
- Person on crutches coming back from a skiing holiday
- Park employees taking equipment from a boat

- Young artists with heavy paints and easel
- School group on a field trip (less likely to stumble)
- Couple carrying a heavy lunch basket
- Emergency personnel responding with equipment

It is estimated there are more than 54 million people in our country today who meet the legal definition of a person with a disability. This includes those who have significant degrees of mobility, sensory, or cognitive limitations. In Indiana, there are about 900,000 people 5 years of age and older who reported having a disability. These numbers make people with disabilities the largest minority group in the nation. Many of these people have spouses, children, relatives, and friends. They belong to churches, support groups, and social organizations.

Further, when we consider the growing percentage of our population that is age 65 or older, those with invisible disabilities such as cardiac and respiratory problems, returning veterans, those who have temporary disabilities such as broken arms or legs, parents with strollers and wheeled devices, and the families and friends who travel with these individuals, it takes little effort to see that virtually everyone benefits from accessibility.

And these people with disabilities (according to

the U.S. Census Bureau) have \$220 billion in discretionary spending power. Open Doors Organization released a 2015 Market Study that showed American adults with disabilities spend \$17.3 billion annually on just their own travel. When facilities and programs are “universally designed” to serve all people, access is generally enhanced for everyone.

This is not the case with non-accessible design. In addition, research has shown that if accessibility is provided at the design stage, the extra cost is negligible. Studies show that the additional cost of making a building accessible costs an average of 0.5% more, and rarely more than 1.0% of the total cost. This incremental cost is modest, especially relative to the large percentage of the population who benefits.

We believe that the best way to approach the issue of accessibility is in a comprehensive, organized way rather than on a project-by-project basis. The primary goal is to develop and coordinate a systemwide, comprehensive approach to achieving the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable while ensuring consistency with other legal mandates as well as the conservation and protection of the resources we manage.

Since at least 1993, the DNR has worked with an accessibility coordinator to:

1. assess the level of accessibility of various properties;
2. identify the barriers to accessibility;
3. develop policies and guidelines regarding appropriate methods and techniques for improving access; and
4. provide technical assistance and in-service training on effective approaches and program implementation.

There are many reasons for initiating accessibility efforts:

Legal benefits

- Meeting the legal mandates
- Avoid arbitrations/mediations
- Avoid court cases

Technical benefits

- Ramps are easier to manage/clean
- Accessibility features require little if any extra effort
- Good for all, not just people with disabilities
- Improve use

Economic benefits

- Increase productivity—spend less time defending complaints
- Reduce costs (maintenance/support)
- Decrease injury claims (public and worker)
- Increase profits (from greater participation)

PR benefits

- Property seen as inclusive and forward-looking
- Avoid complaints
- Avoid negative media coverage

It simply makes good sense to employ principles of “universal design” in providing facilities for everyone rather than for only a portion of the population.

While there are sanctions that can be brought for noncompliance with legal requirements, it is the fact that it simply makes sense that, in the long term, is the most significant reason for providing accessibility.

DEFINE YOUR TERMS

We refer to legal terms and other concepts that are critical to understanding our responsibilities. Most of the following definitions are taken from the laws, rules, regulations, and standards that have been promulgated in connection with disability rights legislation in this country. That includes the authorities, implementation regulations, and official standards developed by the Department of Justice and the U.S. Access Board.

Architectural Accessibility means the design, construction and/or alteration of a building or facility that follows officially sanctioned design standards. Because of the creation of the official design standards for accessibility, this term carries a legal definition. Buildings or facilities that are not in compliance with official standards are not considered to be “accessible.” This term is used in concert with the concept of “program accessibility.” (28 CFR 35 Subpart D)

Auxiliary Aids means services or devices that enable people to have an equal opportunity to participate in and enjoy the benefits of programs, services, or activities. Some examples of auxiliary aids and services include:

- Qualified Interpreters
- Qualified Readers for people with vision limitations
- Brailled materials
- Audio recordings

- Assistive listening devices
- Telephone handset amplifiers
- Telephones compatible with telecommunication devices for deaf
- Written materials

Qualified Individual with a Disability means an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs, services or activities provided by a public entity. (The definition of “disability” can be found at § 35.108.)

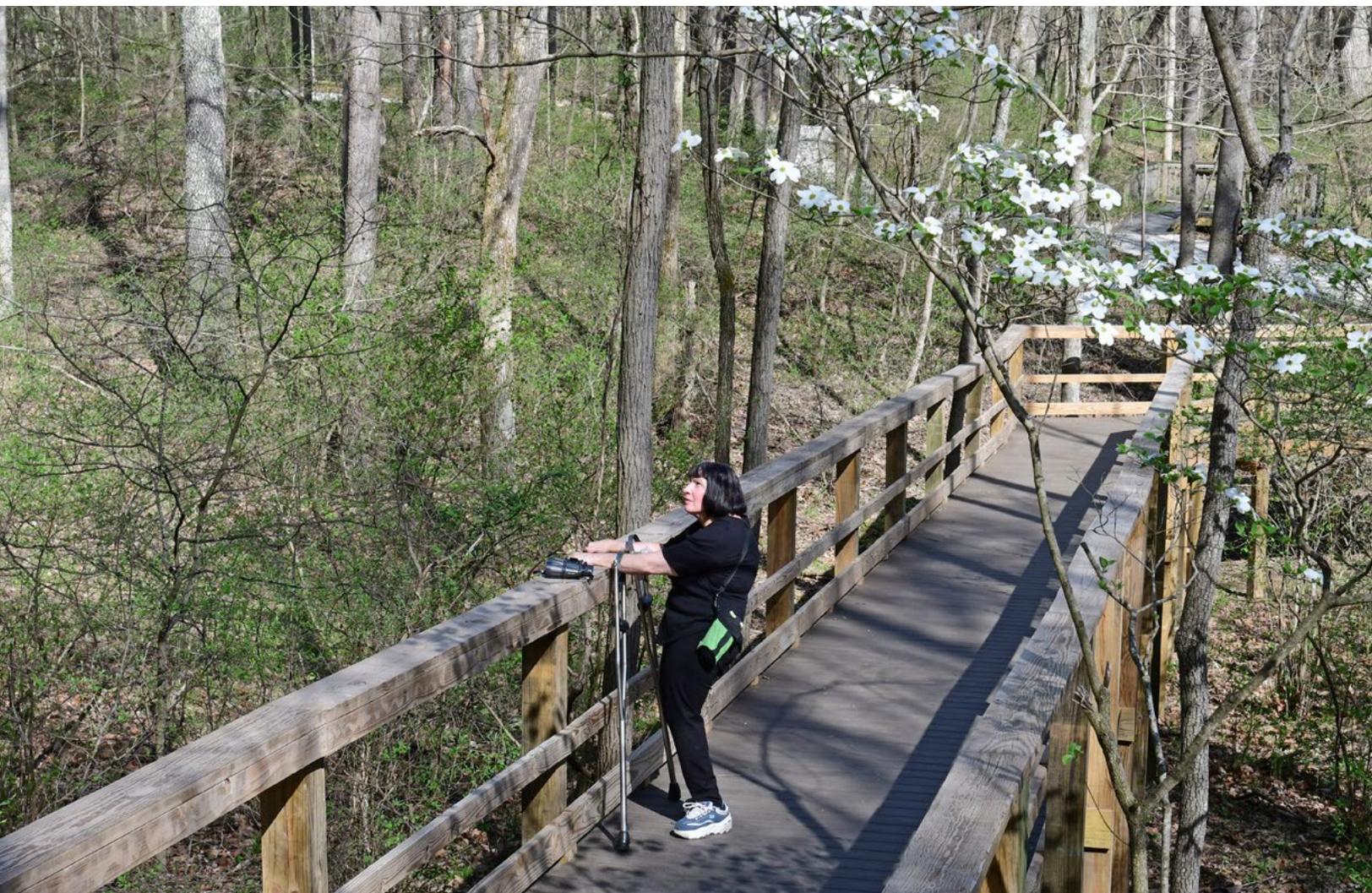
Program Accessibility means that the programs, services, and activities provided to visitors and/or employees will be provided in conformance with 28 CFR Part 35. This means they will be provided in such a way that individuals with disabilities are not excluded from nor denied the benefits of that program, ser-

vice, or activity. This term is used in concert with the concept of “architectural accessibility.”

Reasonable means not only capable of being accomplished but also staying within the bounds of common sense and sound judgment when considering other factors such as costs, benefits, the nature of the environment, and the responsibilities toward protecting park resources and values.

Universal Design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The universal design concept simplifies life for everyone by making products, communications and the built environment more usable by more people at little or no extra cost. The universal design concept targets all people of all ages, sizes and abilities. (The Center for Universal Design, North Carolina State University)

The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-480) requires all buildings and facilities built or renovated in whole or in part with federal funds to





be accessible to and usable by physically disabled persons. Since 1968, official standards for making buildings accessible have been developed and the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board has been created to monitor and enforce compliance with the law.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112), as amended, is more encompassing than the Architectural Barriers Act. While the act requires physical access to buildings and facilities, Section 504 requires program accessibility in all services provided with federal dollars. The act itself is brief. It states:

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by Federal Financial Assistance or by any Executive Agency.”

This means we not only have to be concerned with enabling people with disabilities to have access to parks and facilities but, once achieved, we must do everything feasible to enable them to receive as close to the same benefits as those received by other visitors.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-336), as amended, provides a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

NOTHING NEW

One of everyone’s goals is to ensure that all people, including the estimated 54 million with disabilities, have the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable to our programs, services and activities in conformance with applicable regulations and standards.

This is one reason we seek to provide that level in the planning, construction, and renovation of buildings and facilities and in the provision of programs, services, and activities for the public and our employees. In conforming to the appropriate standards, the level of accessibility will be largely determined by the nature of the area and program and will be consistent with our obligation to conserve State resources and preserve the quality of the experience.

For about 57 years, as required by the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, federal agencies and entities receiving federal funds had to make their facilities and programs accessible to people with disabilities.

In 1990, more than 35 years ago, Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which extended accessibility and nondiscrimination requirements in five areas: employment, public services, public accommodations, telecommunications, and miscellaneous provisions.

How does this translate to park and recreation providers? State and local governments, including counties, cities, towns and townships, are covered by Title II of the ADA (public services). Likewise, commercial and nonprofit park and recreation providers are covered by the ADA Title III (public accommodations) because they provide services to the public. These include nonprofit groups such as “friends of the parks” and trail groups, YMCAs and Boys and Girls clubs, as well as commercial entities providing canoe rentals,

fitness facilities, go-cart racing, amusement parks, ski resorts, rafting companies, bowling alleys, etc. As a rule of thumb, if you are involved with the public, whether via government or private business, you have had to provide accessible facilities, programs, and services for quite a while.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

In determining what standard to use or how to comply, a good rule is to start with the best, most current information. There are basically two standards to look at, the **2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design and Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Accessibility Standards**. Detailing various laws and how they apply is unnecessary. For our purposes, following these standards will satisfy all your requirements.

These standards give detailed guidance based on the minimum requirements set forth in laws, rules, and regulations. Please don't miss this: "... based on the minimum requirements" One fundamental, guiding principle is that we will seek to provide the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable and not simply provide the minimum level that is required by law. Consequently, managers are encouraged to exceed the requirements for visitor accessibility through innovative techniques and partnerships whenever possible and reasonable. The five objectives of this are to:

1. Incorporate the long-range goal of providing the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable for people of all abilities in all programs, services, and activities instead of providing "separate" or "special" programs.
2. Implement this goal within the daily operation of the DNR, its policies, organizational relationships, and implementation strategies.
3. Provide further guidance and direction regarding the DNR interpretation of laws and policies.
4. Establish a framework for the effective implementation of actions necessary to achieve the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable; and,
5. Ensure the implementation of "universal design" principles within the DNR.

The ADA is a comprehensive civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The ADA requires that newly constructed and altered state and local government facilities, places of pub-

lic accommodation, and commercial facilities be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. To continue to guide this process, the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design went into effect on March 15, 2012. The Justice Department adopted the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010 Standards or Standards) as part of the revised regulations for Title II and Title III of the ADA. The standards can be found at: ada.gov/regs2010/titleII_2010/titleII_2010_regulations.htm.

As mentioned earlier, the standards set minimum requirements—both scoping and technical—for new construction and alterations of the facilities of more than 80,000 state and local governments and more than 7 million businesses.

In addition to the 2010 standards, the DOJ has also posted on its website important guidance about the standards compiled from material in the Title II and Title III regulations. This guidance provides detailed information about their adoption of the 2010 standards, including changes to the standards, the reasoning behind those changes, and response to public comments received on these topics.

The 2010 Standards for Accessible Design contains codified specifications for these recreational facilities:

- Amusement Rides
- Recreational Boating Facilities
- Exercise Machines and Equipment
- Fishing Piers and Platforms
- Golf Facilities
- Miniature Golf Facilities
- Play Areas
- Saunas and Steam Rooms
- Swimming Pools, Wading Pools and Spas
- Shooting Facilities with Firing Positions

Achieving accessibility in outdoor environments has long been a source of inquiry due to challenges and constraints posed by terrain, the degree of development, construction practices and materials, and other factors.

The U.S. Access Board has issued requirements that are now part of the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Accessibility Standards and apply to national parks and other outdoor areas developed by the federal government. They do not apply to outdoor areas developed with federal grants or loans; however, they offer "best practices" as entities determine the

proper way to provide access. A guide that explains these requirements is available here: [access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities/outdoor-developed-areas/a-summary-of-accessibility-standards-for-federal-outdoor-developed-areas](https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities/outdoor-developed-areas/a-summary-of-accessibility-standards-for-federal-outdoor-developed-areas).

The newest provisions address access to:

- trails,
- picnic and camping areas,
- viewing areas,
- beach access routes,
- and other components of outdoor developed areas on federal sites when newly built or altered.

They also provide exceptions for situations where terrain and other factors make compliance impracticable. These requirements are in sections F201.4, F216.3, F244 to F248, and 1011 to 1019 of the ABA Standards.

The U. S. Access Board intends to develop guidelines for nonfederal outdoor sites covered by the ADA and areas developed with federal grants and loans covered by the ABA through subsequent rulemaking.

As noted above, accessibility specifications for these recreational facilities are not yet adopted by standard-setting agencies but are considered “best available information” and should be used when constructing new or altering existing facilities.

Remember, there is no grandfather clause written into accessibility legislation or standards.

It is a common misconception of facility managers and building owners to believe that facilities built before accessibility standards do not need accessibility modifications. As noted in the following section, this is not the case. According to accessibility standards, altering a facility triggers using the current accessibility standards. Furthermore, each state and local government entity is required by Title II to conduct a self-evaluation of the accessibility of programs and facilities and create a corresponding Transition Plan to correct identified accessibility deficiencies. Because many facilities built before accessibility standards are often not compliant, the Transition Plan will include ways to remove barriers from these facilities.

PROGRAM ACCESS

Program accessibility was first legislated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which states:

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disabili-

ty in the United States, as defined in section 7 (20), shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance or under any program or activity conducted by any Executive agency or by the United States Postal Service.”

This important principle was also written into the ADA legislation: “A public entity may not deny the benefits of its programs, activities, and services to individuals with disabilities because its facilities are inaccessible.

“A public entity’s services, programs, or activities, when viewed in their entirety, must be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. This standard, known as ‘program accessibility,’ applies to all existing facilities of a public entity. Public entities, however, are not necessarily required to make each of their existing facilities accessible.” (US DOJ, ADA Title II; 1990) In essence, program accessibility applies to almost anything. Although you may not be constructing new or altered facilities, program access may or may not require you to make physical changes to your facilities. Program access may also require modifications to your policies, practices and/or procedures. Consider the following scenarios:

- A property’s main office is located in an inaccessible building built in the 1950s. The property retrofits the building so that the parking, route to the building, public offices, and support facilities such as public restrooms are accessible to the public.
- Signs interpreting the natural and cultural history of the area are provided on a trail.
- Audio tours may be used to effectively communicate to a person with low or no vision the information contained in the interpretive displays.
- Commission board meetings usually are held in an inaccessible historic building. The new commission members have decided to officially move the meeting location to an accessible location that allows all interested public, regardless of ability, to attend without prior notification.
- A property offers movie nights each Friday in September. Staff ensure captions are turned on during each movie so people who are hard of

hearing or deaf can also enjoy the show without having to ask or attend a particular show.

Staff training is a key component to ensuring programs and services are accessible. Disability awareness and accessibility training should be provided for all staff and volunteers. This helps ensure visitors with disabilities are treated with respect and requests for accommodation are responded to appropriately.

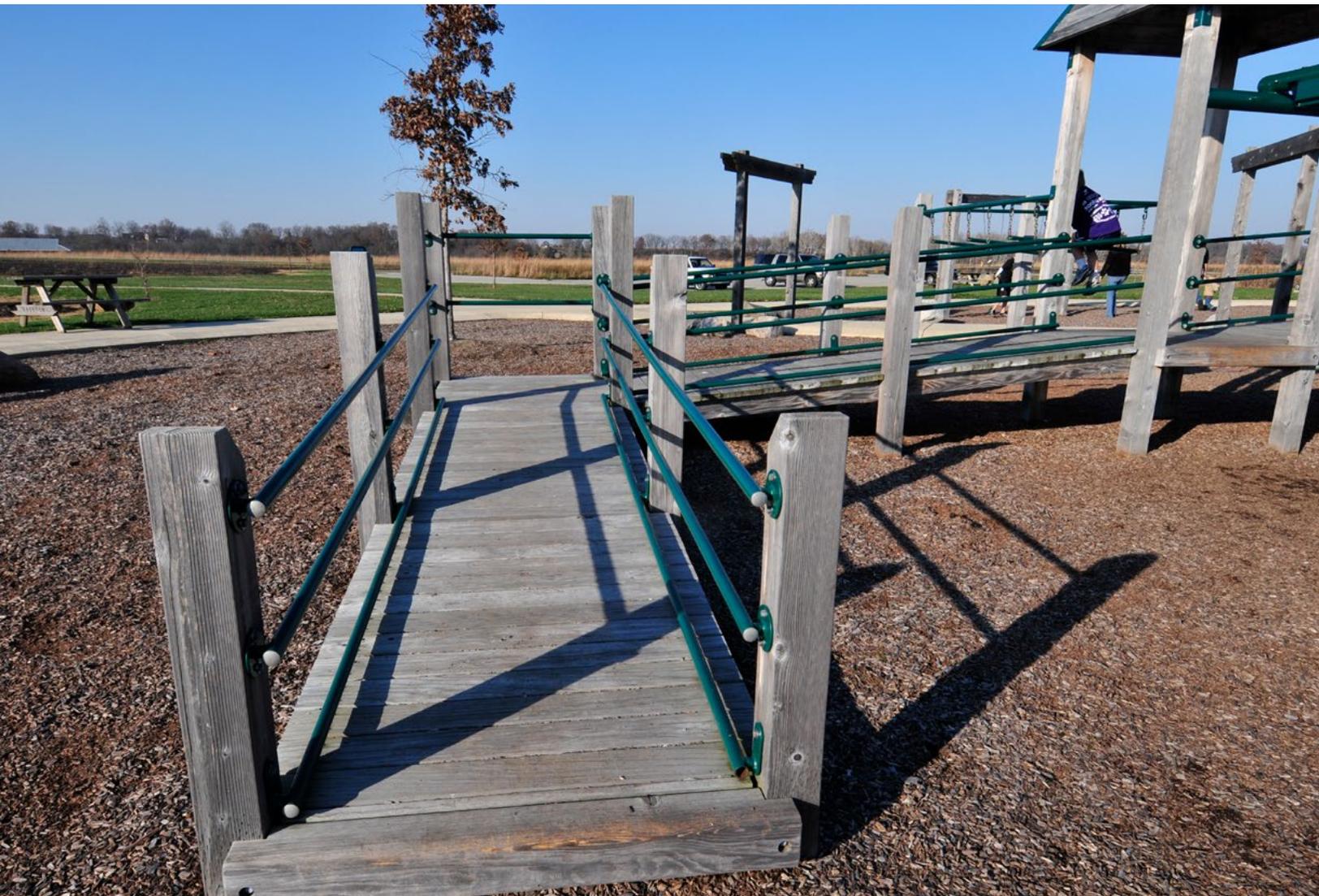
MEASURE, MARK AND MEASURE AGAIN

You have probably heard this rule of thumb. It refers to making sure the cut is made correctly the first time. But it can extend to the philosophy of doing things correctly. Throughout the process, you will be in the best shape if you design to exceed the minimum. For example, the range for the height of grab bars in a restroom is 33-36 inches from the floor to the top of the gripping surface. Shooting for 34 or so

will give you plenty of wiggle room. Doing will not cost more, but even if a contractor makes a small adjustment, you will still be safe.

In addition, you should understand that the ADA/ABA Standards were developed by several individuals with a variety of interests and perspectives. Building to the standards will accommodate many but not all people with disabilities. Exceeding the standards where possible will provide increased accessibility and opportunities for even greater numbers of people. For example, incorporating Universal Design concepts will provide greater access for those in your community with more severe disabilities.

The term Universal Design was coined by architect Ronald L. Mace to describe the concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone regardless of age, ability, or status in life. In most instances, the increased cost is negligible while the benefits are significant.



Some examples:

- Smooth, ground-level entrances without stairs
- Surface textures that require less force to travel across
- Wide interior doors, hallways, and alcoves with 60 inch x 60 inch turning space
- Single-hand operation with closed fist for operable components like door and faucet handles
- Light switches with large flat panels rather than small toggle switches
- Buttons and other controls that can be distinguished by touch
- Bright and appropriate lighting, particularly task lighting
- Instruction that presents material both orally and visually

Consider your own preferences and desires. Would you be more inclined to take your family to a well-kept, clean park or, when seeing trash or unmowed areas, just move on? The same idea holds for exceeding requirements. Clearly, an area that the community can be proud of will be less likely to be defaced or vandalized. Having a model will draw in people and support from a wider area.

This is a major reason why we do what we do.

A WORD ABOUT PRODUCTS, DESIGNERS AND CONSULTANTS

At one time or another (perhaps daily) most park and recreation professionals are responsible for choosing products for use in their facilities. Whether additions or replacements, there are many products for which the professional must know how to determine accessibility.

Picnic tables, benches, play structures and surfacing, sinks, lockers, and drinking fountains are among the many products that must be accessible. It is important for the buyer to investigate potential products and not rely solely on a vendor's claim of accessibility or "ADA Approved."

In addition to purchasing products, recreation practitioners also work with designers and consultants during capital improvement projects. Before hiring a specific company, recreation practitioners should ask how much accessibility experience their staff has. While many architects, landscape architects, and engineers are aware of accessibility, it is often not their focus while designing and construct-

ing new facilities or during rehabilitation projects. Before hiring a designer or consultant, requests for qualifications (RFQ) may be posted. If RFQs are used, be sure to ask for information regarding accessibility compliance.

After hiring a company, be sure to have a knowledgeable person on park staff review plans for accessibility as well as other concerns before bidding. Work with the person (consultant or in-house) preparing the bid document to include language regarding the liability of the contractor regarding accessibility. Include people with disabilities in the process. Asking for this input/perspective not only provides a "new set of eyes," but also helps spread the word about your program.

WRAP-UP AND RESOURCES

The primary reason for making programs, services, and activities accessible is it is the right thing to do. It makes sense to employ the principles of "universal design" in providing facilities and programs that are accessible to and usable by everyone. Failure to do so denies the opportunity for more than 54 million citizens with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to enjoy their properties. Penalties for noncompliance can be significant in terms of the cost associated with having to remove features that have been constructed inappropriately and replacing them. The costs in terms of denying people with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy the grandeur and educational values of these experiences is also significant, though not easily measured. The laws and regulations contain compliance enforcement procedures. In the final analysis, the ultimate measure of accountability will be the degree to which people with disabilities can visit, receive the same services, and access the same opportunities as other visitors.

Our intent is to provide the tools necessary to ensure that whatever program you develop will be the best it can be for all. No one, including people with disabilities, wants to be unnecessarily singled out or treated differently. We all want to enjoy our natural resources in as natural an environment as possible, but we also want to make sure we do not create barriers that could be avoided. Please contact the following resources for free and anonymous accessibility information and/or technical assistance.

U.S. Department of Justice:

Find out more about the ADA or the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design using the toll free ADA Information Line at 800-514-0301 (voice) or 833-610-1264 (TTY) or go to ada.gov.

U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
4CON, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20530
Phone (voice): (202) 307-0663

The U.S. Access Board

The Access Board is an independent federal agency devoted to accessibility for people with disabilities. Created in 1973 to ensure access to federally funded facilities, the board is a leading source of information on accessible design. The board develops and maintains design criteria for the built environment, transit vehicles, telecommunications equipment, and electronic and information technology. It also provides technical assistance and training on these requirements and on accessible design and continues to enforce accessibility standards that cover federally funded facilities.

United States Access Board
1331 F Street, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004-1111
Phone (voice): (202) 272-0080
Phone (TTY): (202) 272-0082
Fax: (202) 272-0081
access-board.gov
Email: info@access-board.gov

Great Lakes ADA Center

The DBTAC-Great Lakes ADA Center provides information, materials, technical assistance, and training on the ADA. Topics addressed include the nondiscrimination requirements in employment, the obligations of state and local governments and business to ensure programs, services, and activities are readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. This includes access to the information technology used by these entities including but not limited to websites, software, kiosks, etc.

DBTAC—Great Lakes ADA Center (MC 728)
1640 W. Roosevelt Road, Room 405
Chicago, IL 60608
(312) 413-1407 (V/TTY) or
800-949-4232 (V/TTY)
(312) 413-1856 (Fax)
adagreatlakes.org

National Center on Accessibility

The National Center on Accessibility is a nonprofit center operating under Indiana University in Bloomington. The center offers information, training, research, technical assistance, and consultation on issues related to accessibility to parks, recreation programs, activities, and services.

National Center on Accessibility
2805 E. 10th Street, Suite 170
Bloomington, IN 47408
(812) 855-3095
ncaonline.org



CHAPTER 6

Indiana Trails Plan

The 2026 Indiana Trails Plan builds on a strong foundation established by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) previous trail plans. These previous efforts laid critical groundwork in identifying trail priorities, expanding trail networks, and elevating the role of trails as vital elements of Indiana's communities, economy, and quality of life. Since the publication of those plans, Indiana has made significant strides in growing and connecting its trail systems, while also confronting new challenges related to demand and funding.

The 2026 plan continues this momentum, offering an updated vision for Indiana's trail future. It provides a comprehensive look at the state's trail supply, assessing current trail miles and notes the progress made in the past five years. An updated Visionary Trails map outlines long-term connectivity goals, guiding future expansion with a focus on strategic, high-impact projects.

In addition, this plan explores trail demand, analyzing surveys and trail count data and highlighting recreation needs across the state. Based on this assessment, goals were formulated to present actionable recommendations to ensure Indiana's trail systems continue to meet the evolving needs of residents and visitors.

Together, these components aim to strengthen

Indiana's position as a national leader in trails development and stewardship, fostering connected communities throughout the state.

This trail plan is not a DNR call to action or a plan for the state to complete in five years. This is information collected from trail users and trail providers and put together into a plan for the state.

TRAIL SUPPLY

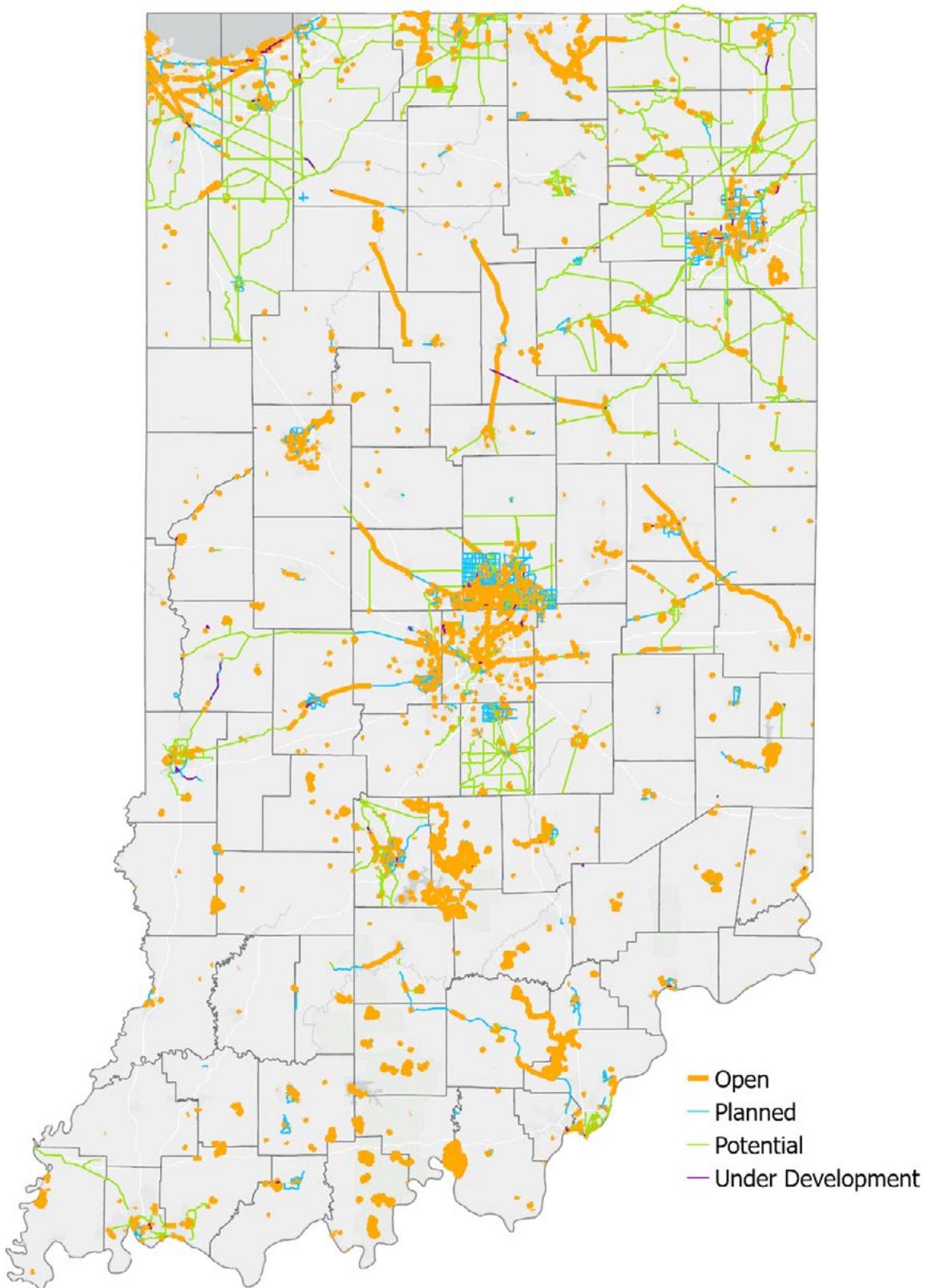
Indiana Trails Inventory

Indiana DNR staff maintain a database and map of all known trails in the state, including those that are open, under development, proposed, or have potential to be developed. This includes trails managed by federal, state, and local governments, as well as those run by nonprofits. This information is kept up-to-date through the close monitoring of new trail construction and related news stories, review of aerial imagery throughout the state, information gained from the administration of grants programs, and frequent communication between the DNR, trail organizations, stakeholders, and local governments. The trails inventory and its data are available to the public through the Indiana Trail Finder, a mobile and user-friendly interactive map launched in 2016.

As of October 2025, Indiana had 4,584 miles of

Figure 6.1

INDIANA TRAILS INVENTORY



trails open to the public, an increase of 491 miles since 2019.

Trails by Status:

- Open – 4,584 miles
- Under Development – 134 miles
- Planned – 1,195 miles
- Potential – 2,711 miles

Trail Miles by Recreation:

- Hike/Pedestrian – 3,956 miles (up 386 miles from 2019)
- Road Biking – 1,918 miles (up 384 miles)
- Mountain Biking – 712 miles (Up 82 miles)
- Equestrian – 699 miles (Up 9 miles)

Blueways

Indiana's blueways, provide paddlers with many opportunities to explore the state's rivers, lakes, and streams. With 767 public access sites, 441 of which are managed by the Indiana DNR Division of Fish, Wildlife & Nature Preserves, enthusiasts can easily find entry points for adventures on the waters.

In June 2020, the DNR launched the Where to Paddle interactive map, which combines useful water trail amenity information provided by both state and federal agencies. The map contains access sites, water level gauges, lowhead dam locations, watercraft rental locations, river miles, and streamside camping locations.

There are no active state water trails programs in Indiana as there are in some neighboring states, including Ohio and Michigan. Thankfully, water trail organizations continue to advocate, promote, and improve water trails throughout Indiana. The Ohio River Way, an organization driven by a coalition of agencies, communities and organizations, in Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky, aims to enhance access to the Ohio River, promote safe and healthy outdoor recreation, and boost the economies of vibrant river communities. They have successfully instituted a river town program and have installed water trail signs along their route. Thanks to their efforts, a 308-mile stretch of the Ohio River has been designated as a national water trail by the National Park Service. It joins the Kankakee River as the two designated national water trails in Indiana.

Other organizations like the Northeast Indiana



Water Trails, Northwest Indiana Paddlers Association, and Paddle Perry continue to advocate on behalf of and improve water trails in their regions. Their efforts include installing water trail signage along popular routes, offering safety and instructional courses, hosting social paddles, and more. Members from these organizations also are involved with the Indiana Paddlesports Alliance, a 501c3 organization aiming to represent water trail interests throughout the state.

Motorized Recreation

Off-Road Vehicle Recreation

Indiana supports a robust off-roading community, with two major state-operated Off-road State Recreation Areas (OSRAs). Combined, these properties offer more than 100 miles of off-roading trail sprawled out over 4,000 acres.

In addition to these state-managed areas, Indiana is home to several privately operated ORV parks, providing additional access to varied landscapes and trail systems throughout the state.

By default, ORVs are not allowed on public roads; however, state law allows local jurisdictions to pass ordinances to open their county or city streets for off-road recreation and transportation. To date, 85 (out of 92) counties have passed an ordinance allowing motorized ORV use on their county roads. County ordinances vary with their restrictions and requirements, so users are advised to review them before taking off on local roads.

As of the latest data, Indiana has approximately 98,578 registered ORVs, a significant increase from 64,611 in 2020, reflecting the growing popularity of off-roading in the state.

Snowmobiling in Indiana

Indiana also supports snowmobiling in the northern part of the state where snowfall is more consistent. There are four designated state snowmobile trails and an additional privately operated trail contributing. These trails wind through scenic woodlands and rural landscapes, offering seasonal fun for snowmobile enthusiasts. Most of the land used for these trails is leased from landowners and farmers, making the land inaccessible for recreation during the summer months.

As of the most recent figures, Indiana has about 8,603 registered snowmobiles, a decline from 9,134 in 2020, likely due to variability in winter conditions, an aging user group, and shifting recreation trends.

VISIONARY TRAILS MAP

The Visionary Trails map is a collection of existing and proposed trail corridors. It predominantly focuses on bike/pedestrian trails that provide a backbone of connected trails throughout Indiana. The map has been simplified and no longer differentiates between

visionary and potential visionary. All included trails in the visionary map have shown progress since the map's first iteration in 2006. Many included trails have open sections of trail, while others include trail projects that are actively seeking grants and have firm plans in place.

The visionary corridor that is part of this Trails Plan will be the last one created. The first visionary corridor map was published as part of the *Hoosiers on the Move – The Indiana State Trails, Greenways & Bikeways Plan* in 2006. The intent of the map was to highlight corridors that could connect communities to each other and to serve as a statewide trails backbone network that can connect to concurrent and future trails-planning efforts. When this map was created, the trails inventory for Indiana had 2,074 miles of trail, and the visionary map was a tool for communities to use to work together to create longer trails. Today, 4,584 miles of open trail are mapped, and we continue to track planned trails all over the state. The key gaps in longer corridors are known and easy to find; a map showing the corridors simply isn't needed anymore.

The DNR used the visionary map as scoring criteria for trail grants to incentivize projects that connected, expanded, or contributed to the visionary corridors. Over the decades of doing this, it became evident that grant applications were not done because of the visionary map. Trail connections are important without needing a map to show it. The extra points awarded to projects weren't enough to change the course of grant awards. In addition, the DNR started to get pressure from locals to change the visionary map to include their future trail project. They were trying to change the map to score extra points, a far cry from the intent of those who started the map in 2006.

Another goal from the *Hoosiers on the Move* plan was to have a trail within 7.5 miles of every Hoosier. When that goal was met with more than 95% of people living that close to a trail, the goal was increased to 5 miles. Years later, that goal was reached, and DNR stopped awarding grant points to trail projects that helped complete it. Just like that tool, the visionary trail map has outgrown its usefulness as both a planning tool and as criteria for trail grants. The DNR is working on a way to incorporate all the known and planned trails into a better tool for the 2030 trails

Figure 6.2

2026 VISIONARY TRAIL SYSTEM MAP

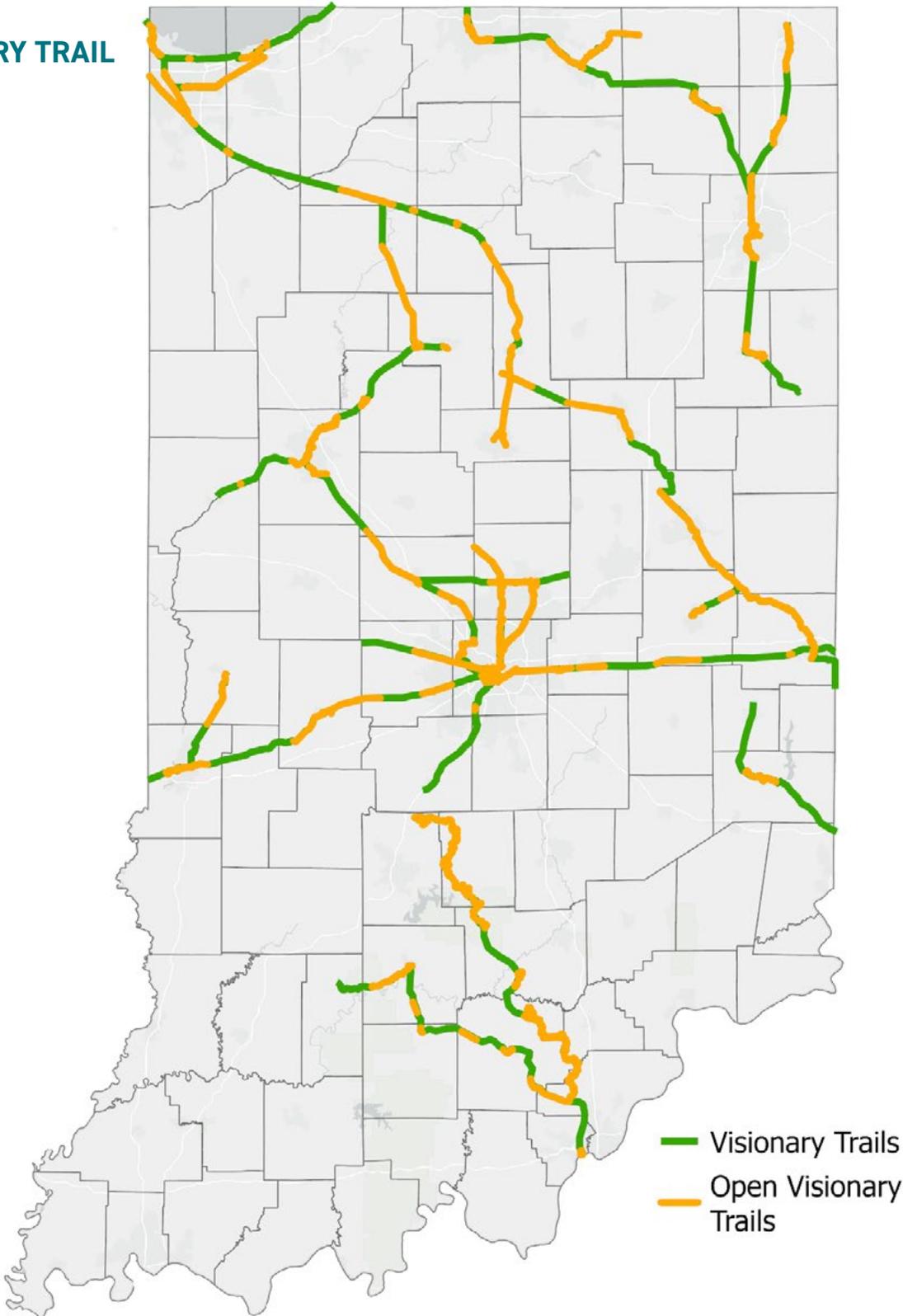


Table 6.1 Visionary Trail Mileage

	Total Mileage	Open Mileage	Percent Complete
Visionary Trails	1241	785	63.23%

plan update. Statewide planners and local trail builders will have a better tool to see the possible connections with potential long-distance trails instead of using a map that is updated only once every five years. DNR's grant criteria will still focus on trails that make key connections and bridge significant trail gaps. The importance of the connections, not whether they are on a line, will be the determining factor for additional points in future applications.

Visionary Trails

- American Discovery Trail North
- B&O Trail
- Big Four Trail
- Cardinal Greenway
- Covered Bridge Gateway Trail
- Erie Lackawanna
- Great American Rail-Trail
- Knobstone Trail/Tecumseh Trail
- Marquette Greenway
- Martinsville to Indianapolis
- Midland Trace Trail
- Milwaukee Road Trail
- Monon South Trail
- Monon Trail/Cultural Trail
- National Road Heritage Trail
- Nickel Plate Trail
- North Central IN Greenway
- Panhandle Pathway
- Poka-bache Connector Trail
- Wabash Heritage Trail
- Whitewater Canal Trail
- Wilbur Wright Trail

TRAIL FUNDING

Next Level Trails

Next Level Trails (NLT) was a grant program to incentivize collaborative efforts to accelerate trail connections throughout Indiana. Between 2019 and 2023, four rounds of grant awards were given to regionally and locally significant trail projects administered by local units of government or nonprofit organizations.

NLT invested \$180 million into Indiana trails. It was the single greatest infusion of funding for trails in Indiana's history. The initial \$90 million funding came from the renegotiation of the Toll Road lease in 2018. In 2021, an additional \$60 million came from federal funds allocated by the Indiana State Legislature. Lastly, in the 2024-2025 state budget, the Indiana State Legislature designated another \$30 million in state funds to the program. Regionally significant grants were awarded from \$250,000 to \$5,000,000; locally significant grants were awarded from \$200,000 to \$2,000,000.

The funds were used for design and construction for public nonmotorized trails, corridor acquisition, trailheads, and trail amenities like benches, water fountains, bicycle racks, and bicycle repair stations. Each grant award required a 20% match from the local community in monetary contributions, land value, and in-kind donations of materials and labor. Matches greater than 20% were encouraged.

Preference was given to:

- projects that connect multiple cities or counties;



- projects that further the State Visionary Trail system;
- projects that connect schools, parks, neighborhoods, commercial centers, local attractions, and existing trails; and
- projects that collaborate between applicants.

DNR staff reviewed applications and presented projects to a multi-agency scoring committee. Eighty-nine trail projects were awarded NLT grants. As of October 2025, 54 projects were completed, totaling more 159 miles of trail, and 17 projects were under construction.

Additionally receiving NLT funding, the Monon South Trail is a 62.3-mile abandoned rail corridor through five counties and eight communities in southern Indiana from New Albany to Mitchell. The corridor was purchased for \$5.5 million, and \$24.5 million was awarded for design and engineering and the initial 25 miles of construction.

While the NLT grant program was the largest in state history, it became more than just a large pot of money. The NLT program was well-known, popular, and had bipartisan support. Communities that didn't know much about trail grants heard about it and applied. Large trail projects suddenly had a chance at funding that could make a real difference in their community. The program had such an impact on the trail world that it was only able to fund about a third of the projects that applied. With increased visibility, the program was highly competitive.

The total economic impact of the grants was often lost in the repeated number of state funds given toward trails. The \$180 million in funds was the highlight of many speeches and media releases and the local match was often overlooked. Including local match, the total investment on trails due to NLT was more than \$260 million.

Indiana Trails Program

The Indiana Trails Program (ITP) is a new state grant program that replaced the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in 2021. The ITP is like Indiana's existing RTP and is still administered by DNR. The main difference is that funds for ITP are now state dollars rather than federal funds. The switch to state funds streamlined grant and program administration for DNR and INDOT, saving significant time and money. This allows more of the grant money to be used

to build trails with the same funds in a shorter timeline. The change was beneficial to INDOT, DNR, and the grant recipients. Because the original source of funding has not changed, the ITP program mirrors the intent of the RTP program as much as possible.

Other similarities include eligible applicants, projects that may be funded, a minimum of 30% being used for motorized trails, and the 80/20 match requirement. Aside from the change from federal to state dollars, the only other significant difference is that ITP runs on a two-year cycle. As the total amount of money available for grants remains unchanged, each grant round will have twice the money available for trail projects.

In 2025, ITP grants provide awarded applicants a minimum of \$100,000, and a maximum of \$400,000.

With the NLT grant program ended, the 2025 ITP grant round was hypercompetitive in seeking monies from its available \$1.5 million pool. The DNR received 31 applications with more than \$10.5 million in financial requests, far exceeding what it could provide, and only ~15% of projects were awarded.

TRAIL DEMAND

Trail Users Survey

A 2022 trail user survey provided key insights into how Indiana residents engage with trails and about their expectations for the future. A strong majority, 93.4% of respondents, indicated they would like to use a trail at least 12 times per year. The most common activities were walking, running, or jogging (76.6%), followed by hiking (47.5%), biking (39.1%), and water trail use (36%). Off-road vehicle (ORV) use (21.6%), horseback riding (19.1%), and mountain biking (13%) were also popular, though to a lesser extent.

The primary motivations for trail use continue to be for recreation/relaxation, health, and family or social outings, in that order. Word of mouth was the most common way respondents learned about trail opportunities, followed by trail websites and on-site trail signage. When it comes to surface preference, natural surface trails were favored over paved trails.

Regarding trail accessibility, 71.9% of respondents reported having a trail within 5 miles or 10 minutes of their home, and 28.1% said they either

Table 6.2 **Trail users survey results**

	Supply is more than enough/Just Right	Supply does not meet demand/needs to be increased in the future	Does not know current supply
Using trails for alternative transportation routes	25%	56%	19%
Walking/running/jogging	47%	45%	8%
Hiking/backpacking	38%	47%	14%
Bicycle touring (casual, tour or both)	36%	51%	13%
Mountain bike riding	28%	45%	27%
In-line skating	28%	36%	36%
Cross country skiing	22%	35%	43%
Snowmobiling	21%	35%	44%
Off road vehicle riding (motorcycle, 4-wheel, ATV, etc.)	22%	44%	34%
Canoeing/kayaking on water trails or blueways	33%	45%	22%
Horseback riding	27%	39%	34%

did not have a nearby trail or were unsure. In a later question of why a user may not use a trail as much as they like, 14.3% cited a lack of nearby trails as a barrier.

Except for walking and jogging, every other recreational activity showed a gap between user demand and trail supply. The areas with the most significant unmet demand were for those who use trails for alternative transportation, off-road enthusiasts, and for mountain biking. Similarly, 83% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed that connected trails are an important part of community infrastructure.

In terms of funding, aside from using federal grants, respondents favored using state general taxes first and local taxes second to fund both new trail construction and for trail rehabilitation and repair. On average, respondents indicated a willingness to spend \$609 annually on their preferred recreational activities in direct spending, an increase of 42% from five years ago.

Trail Stake Holders Survey

In preparation for a statewide trails charrette in November 2024, a survey was distributed to stakeholders across Indiana to gather insights on trail development priorities and challenges.

Survey responses revealed a fairly even split of opinions regarding the focus of trail efforts. Stakeholders expressed nearly equal support for emphasizing

regional trail connections, integrating local trails into larger networks, and building trails that connect key destinations within individual communities. In terms of development priorities, enhancing community connections ranked as the highest objective, closely followed by the goal of expanding trail mileage for recreational purposes. Additionally, 87.5% of respondents supported allocating state funds toward a combination of building new trails and maintaining existing ones, with a preference for greater investment in new trail construction.

When evaluating the importance of trail connectivity for various benefits given a list of five possible benefits, improving quality of life was overwhelmingly rated as the most significant factor. Health and fitness benefits were the second highest priority, and economic development benefits ranked third.

The survey also highlighted several significant challenges that trail managing entities face. Chief among these was a lack of funding, escalating project costs, and the growing burden of trail rehab needs, with the latter two issues primarily attributed to funding shortfalls. Of note, 56% of respondents identified state funding as their primary financial resource. Federal funding was cited by 20% of stakeholders, local funding by 16%, and private sources by 8%.

These findings provide valuable guidance for shaping future trail policies and investment strategies across the state.



Trails Count Analysis

The Indiana DNR has collected trail count data from 14 different partners since 2019. Partners include DNR landholding divisions, local and regional park departments, municipalities, and trail organizations. Data was received from a total of 142 counters spread throughout 29 counties. Each year, between 51 and 70 trail counters provided complete data for year-to-year comparisons.

Table 6.3 **Year-to-Year Trail Counts**

Year	Trail Count	Percent Change	Counters Used
2024	3,972,310	5.07%	59
2023	3,780,568		
2023	2,777,887	-0.95%	63
2022	2,804,641		
2022	2,876,470	-1.66%	70
2021	2,925,021		
2021	2,797,069	-6.13%	51
2020	2,979,730		
2020	3,630,864	31.43%	66
2019	2,762,586		

From 2019 to 2020, trail usage saw a significant surge of 31.43%, largely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. After that spike, trail counts experienced slight annual decreases from 2020 through 2023 (-6%, -2%, -1%.); however, from 2023 to 2024, trail use rebounded with a 5.07% increase.

Table 6.4 **Cumulative Trail Count** (27 Counters Used)

Year	Trail Count	Percent Change
2019	1,154,774	—
2020	1,424,430	23.35%
2021	1,136,686	-20.20%
2022	1,017,011	-10.53%
2023	1,235,035	21.44%
2024	1,333,178	7.95%

Looking specifically at a consistent set of 26 counters who provided complete data over a six-year period, a similar pattern emerged. This group recorded an even larger increase of trail use from 2019-2020 of 36.5%. While these locations experienced steeper declines from 2020 to 2022 compared to the broader year-to-year counts, they also saw a stronger resurgence from 2022 to 2023, and trail counts continued to rise through 2024. While overall trail counts are down slightly in 2024 compared to 2020 due to

urban trails with heavy traffic, 59% of the counters used in the cumulative analysis had larger counts in 2024 compared to 2020.

Overall, the data reflects the impact of COVID-19 on outdoor recreation trends, with an initial sharp increase during the pandemic, a subsequent dip as restrictions lifted, and a renewed upward trend, with many trails now exceeding their previous peak usage levels.

Monon South Trail – Economic Impact Projection

In 2025, Radius published its economic impact projections from research conducted by the Eppley Center for Parks and Public Lands. In its findings, Radius noted that visitors on predominantly Indiana trails reported spending \$1,840 annually on food/dining.

By using data from similar trails that were at least 20 miles in length and traveled through rural and semi-rural communities, the Monon South Trail, once completed, is projected to:

- Be visited by 25,000 – 93,000 non-local trail users annually, who are estimated to spend \$42-\$103 per person per day.
- Have an economic impact of \$2.1-\$6.9 million per year.

The study demonstrates that trails offer more than a boost to Hoosiers' quality of life and opportunities for recreation, but they also represent an investment into businesses and communities along trail networks.

FINDINGS

Trail demand continues to exceed supply.

The NLT grant program provided an additional \$180 million for new trails in Indiana. This funding mechanism led to the creation of 159 miles of trail open in 2025, with another 79 miles to come.

Even with the increased supply of trails, of the 11 recreations surveyed when asking if trail supply was enough, 91% of the recreation's user groups said that the supply does not meet the demand or should be increased.

Based on trail count data, trail use saw a giant spike of 30%+ in 2020, largely attributed to pandemic lockdowns. As the lockdowns eased, the following

years had small drops in total counts. However, trail counts are again on the rise and in many cases they have surpassed peak trail use seen during COVID lockdowns.

Trail Funding is inadequate to keep up with demand.

Funding for new trails

Even with the largest cash infusion for trail development in Indiana's history through NLT, the demand for trail has not been met. In NLT Round 4 alone, 34 trail projects totaling \$61million in grant asks were not funded. Each grant round of NLT was only able to fund approximately a third of applications, and each of the applicants had at least 20% match. If communities that want trail but do not have available funds to provide for match were added, demand increases even more.

Due to the increase in state funding through NLT, a majority (56%) of trail developing municipalities and organizations used state funding as their primary funding source for creating new trail. And after pursuing federal funds and grants, using state general taxes was the heavily preferred method for trail funding. Now that trail funding has been removed from the state budget for the 2025-2027 biennium, and with increased concerns regarding federal funding, the deficit between trail supply and its demand has been exacerbated.

This exacerbation was confirmed with the 2025 ITP grant cycle in which 31 grant applications had a combined \$10+ million in ask, competing for a pool of \$1.5 million. Approximately 15% of 2025 ITP applicants and projects received funding for their trail projects.

Trail rehab funding

- There is no state funding provided for rehabilitation, resurfacing, or repair of existing trail.
- 94% of trail stakeholders would like to see some state funding provided for trail rehab.
 - 56% would like to see 1-25% of state trail funding be provided for trail rehab, with 75-99% designated for new trail.
 - 31% preferred 26-50% for rehab.
 - 10% preferred 51-75% for rehab.
- The need for repaving and general trail rehab was among the chief challenges faced by trail managing

entities.

- 28.7% of respondents in the trail user survey said that better surface conditions would increase their use of trails.

Better information and resources are needed for both trail users and trail stakeholders.

Indiana made great strides to increase trail information available to the public these past years, including:

- Launch of the Where to Paddle interactive map
- Launch of the Where to Backpack interactive map
- Continued updates to the Trails Inventory/Indiana Trails Finder
- NLT dashboard overviewed grant program progress
- NLT project story maps showcasing completed projects

Even with these improvements, the data suggests that there is still room for improvement.

- 28.1% of trail users said there was not a trail within 5 miles or 10 minutes of their location, whereas almost 95% of Hoosiers have a trail near them.
 - 14.3% of trail users said they do not participate as much as they would like because there are no trails close by.
- Only 38% of trail users discover trail opportunities from trail websites. Word of mouth continues to dominate how users hear about trails.

THE FUTURE OF TRAIL FUNDING

With the NLT program concluding, trail funding will go back to pre-2019 levels. Only the ITP within DNR and INDOT's designated transportation alternatives monies will be available for state trail funding. Federal programs such as ARPA, REDI, and others are either discontinued or do not provide reliable funding. The Indiana Trails Caucus within the legislature continues to advocate for state trails funding. At the federal level, the Coalition of Recreational Trails (CRT) is working to fully fund RTP to current revenue numbers. The program was locked in at 2009 rates and provides about \$84 million annually in the U.S. If the revenue were calculated today, it is estimated to be about \$281 million, essentially tripling trail funding to the states.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE 2026-2030 INDIANA TRAILS PLAN

After achieving the sole goal outlined in the 2016 Trails Plan—ensuring that 95% of Hoosiers live within 5 miles of a trail—the 2021 Trails Plan Update introduced four additional goals. The primary objective of securing additional funding for new trails to meet Hoosiers' growing needs was a major success. Through the NLT program, \$180 million was awarded, leveraging an additional \$80 million in matching funds, for a total investment of more than \$260 million in new trail development.

However, the significant staff time required to administer the NLT program limited the DNR's ability to advance public outreach and programming initiatives. Additionally, securing adequate funding for trail rehab remains a persistent challenge for managing entities. As a result, some goals and strategies from the 2021 update will be carried forward, while others will be revised to reflect the progress and changes of the past five years.

Goal 1: Develop more trail miles to meet growing demand.

Strategy 1: Increase funding for trail development.

Actions:

- Explore all potential options for increased funding, for any and all sources.
- Explore creation of a permanent, revolving fund for trail development.
- Encourage non-trail-specific grant programs to make trail development an eligible cost.

Strategy 2: Support trail connectivity, both regionally and within communities.

Actions:

- Continue to prioritize trail projects that create connections in trail grant programs.
- Provide education and technical assistance to communities looking to create connections.
- Encourage coordination and collaboration between municipalities and nonprofits on forming trail connections.
- Identify and publicize priority connection projects to focus advocacy and resources.

Strategy 3: Provide trail demand data.

Actions:

- Continue to maintain the trail count database, releasing yearly analysis on trail trends.
 - Encourage more municipalities and trail managers to use trail counters and share their data to enlarge the sample size.
 - Have counters be an eligible expense within trail grant programs.
- Create trail user surveys for specific recreations and publish results.
- Identify the largest gaps where trail supply is not meeting demand.
- Incorporate demographic and growth trend analysis into trail planning recommendations.

Strategy 4: Showcase trail benefits.

Actions:

- Develop a communications toolkit that presents the wide-ranging benefits trails offer to Hoosiers and their communities (e.g., health, economic, environmental).
- Encourage further economic impact studies and public health studies tied to trails.
- Share success stories from communities that have realized benefits from trail investments.

Goal 2: Better maintain existing trails.

Strategy 1: Increase trail rehab funding.

Actions:

- Assess rehab needs statewide
- Determine if and how existing funding sources (state, federal, local) can be applied to trail rehab.
- Pursue a state funding resource for trail rehab.

Strategy 2: Improve trail rehab information.

- Share rehab best practices among trail managers and stakeholders.
- Develop expected lifecycle rehab cost models based on surface type, construction methods, and trail age.
- Analyze and report the costs and negative impacts associated with deferred trail rehab.
- Create an online repository of rehab guidelines, toolkits, and resource links.

Goal 3: Improve trail information resources.***Strategy 1: Improve and better publicize trail user opportunities.***

Actions:

- Improve and expand upon existing digital maps
 - Trails Inventory
 - Where to Paddle
 - Where to Backpack
 - Where to Horseback
- Promote new trail projects, milestones, and events through social media and press releases.
- Highlight mileage and connectional benchmarks.
- Provide project dashboards and interactive story maps for projects funded through Indiana Trails Program (ITP) and Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

Strategy 2: Develop a digital trail planning resource.

Actions:

- Create and maintain a publicly available, interactive map specifying where communities are actively working on trail connections.
- Include trails in planning stages or grant-seeking phases, even if funding has not yet been secured.
- Review local and regional trails plans to incorporate planned routes and connections into state-level planning.
- Collaborate with trail stakeholders through surveys, meetings, and workshops to keep the planning map current.



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CHAPTER 7

Some Resources, Ideas & Information

This chapter closes the SCORP by examining resources for parks-and-recreation stakeholders, including a free park-system benchmarking database from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and a discussion of the timely and difficult topic of funding. The last portion of this chapter lists options, resources, and ideas for park boards, superintendents, and concerned citizens who want to improve the financial situation for their park departments.

“PARK METRICS” (NRPA’S FREE, PARK AND RECREATION DATABASE)

The NRPA has a free benchmarking database for use by local government parks-and-recreation departments of all sizes. “Benchmarking” is an informational analysis/planning method that allows a community to compare “apples to apples” by taking community information (such as data about a parks system) gathered from similar communities and comparing it directly. The website for this database is: nrpa.org/publications-research/ParkMetrics/. This database offers the opportunity for local government parks departments to complete an extensive online data gathering process. The newly entered data are hosted for free on servers at NRPA and can be accessed by communities to cross-compare themselves against more than 900 other public parks and recreation

agencies nationwide. In the Oct. 31, 2019, issue of NRPA’s Parks and Recreation Magazine, Melissa May wrote the article “NRPA Park Metrics Replaces NRPA Area and Facilities Standards.” In it, May discusses the importance and potential impacts of using park metrics: “There is not a single set of standards for parks and recreation that could possibly encompass the uniqueness found in every community across the country. Communities vary greatly by size, needs and desires; so too should their park and recreation agencies’ offerings ... When agencies are being placed between ‘a rock’ (of finite budgets) and ‘a hard place’ (of meeting the needs of a growing jurisdiction), knowing your peer data provides a more accurate picture of best practices for your agency. Successful agencies tailor their offerings to meet the needs and demands of all members of their communities. Nearly a decade ago, NRPA replaced the single set of standards with the creation of the nationwide benchmarking tool for parks and recreation. Today, NRPA Park Metrics is the most comprehensive source of data benchmarks and insights for parks-and-recreation agencies. Each spring, we publish the ever-popular NRPA Agency Performance Review, an annual report summarizing the benchmarking data contributed by nearly 1,100 parks-and-recreation agencies to the Park Metrics Database. These benchmarks, however, do not happen

without the participation of more than 1,000 parks-and-recreation agencies across the nation. Entering your agency's data will take only a few minutes but will help to inform the decisions of your colleagues across the industry. So, don't continue to rely on standards that have not been updated for more than two decades. Take a closer look at the NRPA Park Metrics and the NRPA Agency Performance Review to see how your agency compares to its peers. Blending the knowledge of your agency's unique needs with the starting point of custom benchmarking data will allow for more robust, informed decision-making. Your agency is not one-size-fits-all, and the data you use to make strategic decisions should not be either."

PAYING FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

We already have discussed the effects that the recent nationwide economic situation has had on the citizens of Indiana, its local governments, and

on parks-and-recreation departments in particular. Tough financial times bring up the question, "Given our tight budgets, how do we pay for this?"

In reality, tight budgets are nothing new; just ask any parks director who has been in the job for more than 10 years. As previously mentioned, many communities use innovation to find solutions. The good news is that no one has to re-invent the wheel financially; there are many previous examples of successful financing for all aspects of parks and recreation.

The list below offers a few ideas and options for financing or funding parks and recreation or saving money that can be used elsewhere. Each option has a short description to give interested parks professionals or stakeholders a head start on researching more details. We strongly suggest researching local communities that may have used some of these strategies. Modeling after a proven strategy helps ensure success. Some of these options are new, and some



have been in use for decades. All have the potential for fiscally helping parks and recreation. If a nearby community has tried one or more of these methods and succeeded, ask them what worked. Many will happily share their ideas and tactics with anyone who asks.

An abbreviated list of fiscal management/financing methods in parks and recreation:

- **Municipal General Funds and Revolving Funds:** These are the most common taxpayer-funded budget source for many departments. Revolving funds that roll over each budget year help eliminate the spend-it-or-lose-it issue and allow for better fiscal agility over time.
- **Taxes:** These include Local Option Income Tax (LOIT), County Option Income Tax (COIT), County Adjusted Gross Income Tax (CAGIT), County Economic Development Income Tax (CEDIT), Hospitality/Innkeeper Taxes, etc. The proceeds of these tax programs have all been used for parks, recreation and trail-related projects with varying amounts of success.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** These are cooperative efforts between businesses and communities with formal written agreements. These can be either short-term or long-term (single project or ongoing services).
- **Intergovernmental Partnerships and Cooperative Agreements:** These include cooperative efforts between levels of government to provide services for all, using formal, written agreements. One example is for a township to provide some funding to a nearby town's parks system in exchange for free public parks and recreation access to township residents who live outside the town's boundaries.
- **Public and Private Foundations and Endowments:** Examples are the Ball Brothers Foundation, Lilly Endowment, and other well-known foundations. This also includes charitable and community foundations, etc. Many foundations and endowments offer the chance to apply for specialty grants or offer other kinds of assistance.
- **Governmental and Non-Governmental Grants and Funds:** These include the usual parks, recreation, and trails grant programs such as LWCF, ITP, ORLP and RARI, but also can include Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), INDOT Transportation Enhancement (TE), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), local and regional economic development funds, and others, given the use of some creative thinking.
- **Private Philanthropy:** Private donations from individuals or families is still a common method for people to give back to their community. What better way to have your name live on than to pay for a park?
- **Recreation Impact Fees (RIF):** These are local-level fees paid by developers that are intended to help the community cover the new costs of providing local government services to the added development.
- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF):** TIF uses the anticipated future improvements in an area's tax base to pay for current capital development.
- **Municipal Improvement Districts (MID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID):** Similar to TIF, these target improvements specifically to urban blighted or economically depressed areas to encourage development and use future improvements to the MID/BID's tax base to fund current park development.
- **User Fees and Charges:** These include memberships, dues, subscriptions, entry fees, program fees, events, event sales, etc., used to place part or all costs of providing recreation directly on those who use it most. Best practices use sliding scales, scholarships, "free" days, library checkout park passes and other tactics to avoid being too expensive for use by low- or restricted-income residents.
- **Concessions and Concessioners:** These include vending, gift shops, event food sales, contracting, etc. For example, if Little League draws thousands of hungry kids, friends, and parents, consider using the profit from what they buy from you to help maintain those sports fields. This can be either a public function (in which all the profits go back to the park) or a contracted function (in which a contractor does the concession and pays fees or percentages of the profits by contract).
- **Contractor-Provided Services or Private Operators:** Examples are when a contractor from the private sector leases or licenses portions of public park land for amenities such as golf courses, restaurants, sports facilities, skating rinks, or even ho-

tels. If written carefully, the leases or licenses can be lucrative for a local public parks system, but the local government will want to perform thorough due diligence for legality, context of services rendered, and public trust doctrine.

- **Branding:** A parks department can use the same tactic shoe companies use to promote their product. Selling T-shirts and ball caps can market parks in a community and may even make money.
- **Local Park Foundations and “Friends” Groups:** Locally run park foundations are a way to fundraise specifically for a community parks system. They are targeted to local needs and don’t depend on politics or government budgets. “Friends” groups gather human capital in much the same way, allowing interested people to band together to provide labor and work toward completing improvements and fulfilling needs in parks.
- **Donations, Memorials, Bequests, and Gift Catalogs:** In-kind donations mean virtually anything donated besides money. Examples include manpower, skilled labor, or materials. Memorials and bequests are a great way for people to honor family or friends in a lasting way, especially if the person honored loved some aspect of the parks system. Gift catalogs can effectively spread the word about specific projects, wants, and needs. These tools help a parks system make its needs known, which is often necessary in order for someone to offer such a gift.
- **Corporate Sponsorships and Naming Rights:** That big new car lot or corporation that just moved into town might like to put its name on the new ball fields in exchange for funding a couple of years of maintenance, or it might sponsor the new leagues.
- **Volunteer Programs:** Such activities bring enthusiastic public helpers into parks and programs to assist the staff. Trained, passionate volunteers can free up paid staff to work elsewhere and accomplish more for less labor cost.
- **Zoning and Development Requirements and/or Fees:** Similar to RIF, these basically require new commercial and/or residential developments to either build new parks-and-recreation features into their sites (such as a new bike/pedestrian trail extension into the road/sidewalk network of a new senior assisted living center) or pay a set fee to help the community provide the facilities and services the new development will need. It is much cheaper and simpler to build new recreation-based features during initial construction than to add them later. Many developers readily work with these requirements with an eye toward using these low-cost bonus recreation features to attract buyers/residents. People and businesses often want to move next to parks and trails and often will pay a premium to do so.
- **Municipal Loans, Bonds and Levies:** Special Assessment, General Obligation, and other types of loans, bonds, and levies have been used to successfully fund parks-and-recreation development for decades. Carefully research the various types for their diverse tax advantages, beneficial interest rates, etc.
- **“Green” Bonds and “Impact” Investing:** These are debt instruments similar to municipal bonds but are created specifically to raise funds for projects that have a positive environmental or social impact, such as parks. Some investors specifically seek out investments with an environmental or social improvement theme.
- **Parks and Recreation Special Districts:** Related to both zoning and tax methods, these districts are sometimes used to subdivide a larger community’s parks department into smaller portions that can concentrate in more detail on localized fees and financing options, as well as on programs and services that better benefit their unique neighborhoods and local residents.
- **Cooperation and Joint Use Agreements:** If a nearby county park has a lot of new lawnmowers and the staff to run them, and a city park has a trained arborist who could help the county park improve the health of its trees, perhaps an agreement to share personnel and equipment for mutual benefit could be developed. Such an approach works especially well between parks and nearby schools that might be willing to share the non-school-day use of playgrounds and sports fields/courts in exchange for help with maintenance. Indiana State Code directly supports School/Park recreational “Joint Use Agreements.” (This can be found under: IC 20-26-8-1, 2).
- **Infrastructure Sharing:** This is sharing infrastructure resources among local government departments such as placing a park on top of a municipi-



pal parking structure whose fees pay much of the park's costs (like Post Office Square in Boston) or building a stormwater retention pond that doubles as a public lake (like the Historic Fourth Ward Park and Reservoir in Atlanta).

- **Special Events:** Consider using a popular event as a fundraising tool. If a park hosts all or part of a community's biggest local festival, and 50 vendor booths each contribute a \$200 vendor fee, there is a \$10,000 revenue added to the park's budget in exchange for minimum opportunity cost (mowing and trash pickup will have to happen to some degree anyway). The larger the event's scale, the greater the potential for fundraising.
- **Economy of Scale/Bulk Purchasing:** If parks, the community's public works department, and the county's maintenance department need to buy grass seed or fertilizer, lawnmowers or trucks, consider banding together and making a bulk purchase of enough for everyone, which could save everyone money. Coordination is not easy, but the savings can be considerable.
- **Privatization/De-privatization of Maintenance and/or Services:** Consider doing the math about what it costs to do some maintenance and services in-house in terms of labor, materials, training, insurance, etc., and compare those with the costs of contracting them to carefully researched, qualified private firms. Sometimes the reverse is true, and in-house workers may be cheaper in the long run compared to using private contractors. The trick is to do the homework. Make sure to include all possible costs when making comparisons.
- **Aggressive Preventive/Planned/Scheduled Maintenance:** Smart maintenance supervisors know the cost effectiveness of taking care of equipment and facilities. New trucks are expensive compared to the cost of a few oil and fluid changes and tune-ups. Plan equipment and facility maintenance in advance and follow a carefully laid-out schedule. Train all levels of staff to habitually monitor and maintain all equipment, including taking it out of

service when necessary. The same approach can be just as valuable in facilities. For example, air conditioning systems in buildings function longer and use less energy when filters are changed on time, coils are cleaned regularly, and the refrigerant and oil levels are kept full.

Other Financing or Funding Resources

A helpful online resource for any federal grant is www.grants.gov/. The fully searchable website offers access to 26 federal grant-making agencies and their 800 grant programs and even has downloadable or Web-based grant applications available for some programs.

Another helpful website is that of the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) www.in.gov/ocra/. This website features a number of different state and federal grant programs sometimes used for parks and recreation, such as Community Development Block Grants and Indiana Main Street. Contact the OCRA community liaison for any given area to get assistance directly targeted to a specific community's needs.

As mentioned earlier, local community foundations sometimes offer many kinds of specialized grants or can help create a new donation account for a specific park department. Start at www.cof.org/community-foundation-locator to find a nearby foundation.

All of the DNR's outdoor recreation grant programs are listed at www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/recreation/grants/. The grants cover nearly every aspect of natural and cultural resources, and the website includes full details for each, plus contact information.

The NRPA has a website specifically devoted to its competitive grants and fundraising: www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/. The site even offers free fundraising educational materials and other links, too.





APPENDICES

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Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey

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Local Recreation Providers Survey

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APPENDIX A

Indiana Department of Natural Resources Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey

Are you: Male Female

In which category is your age? Under 10 11-14 15-19 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-39 40-44 45-49 50-54 55-59 60-64 65-69 70-74 75-79 80-84 85 & over

In which Indiana county do you live? _____ Do not live in Indiana

On average, how many times do YOU & ANY OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR IMMEDIATE HOUSEHOLD participate in the following outdoor activities? PLEASE PROVIDE AN ANSWER FOR EACH CATEGORY & INCLUDE YOUR ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD.

	More than once a week	Once a week	Twice a month	Once a month	Couple of times per year	Once a year	Never
Walking, jogging, running, hiking							
Bicycling (road, touring, casual, etc.)							
Mountain biking (natural surface trail)							
Outdoor pool swimming							
Splash Pad/Spray Pad							
Swimming/scuba diving/snorkeling (lakes/ponds/rivers/etc.)							
Family/friends/group outdoor gatherings/reunions							
Picnicking							
Playground use							
Fall foliage viewing							
Gardening/landscaping							
Gathering (berries, mushrooms, etc.)							
Relaxation/spiritual renewal							
Health related activities (Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, etc.)							
Bird/wildlife watching							
Outdoor photography							
Attending outdoor spectator sports (baseball, football, soccer, etc.)							
Playing baseball/softball							
Playing basketball							
Playing football (include touch/flag football)							
Playing regular golf/driving range							
Playing disc golf							
Playing soccer							
Playing tennis							
Playing Pickleball							

	More than once a week	Once a week	Twice a month	Once a month	Couple of times per year	Once a year	Never
Rollerblading/roller skating							
Archery							
Playing horseshoes							
Lawn games (badminton, lawn bowling, Bocce Ball, etc.)							
Skate park: Skateboarding/BMX bike (freestyle/trick)							
4-wheeling: ATVs, Jeeps, motocross, 4x4 truck/car, etc.							
(off-road & on trail)							
Horseback riding (all types)							
Fishing (all types)							
Sport shooting (all types shotgun, rifle, pistol, etc.)							
Hunting/trapping (all types)							
Camping (all types)							
Canoeing/kayaking/rowing (boat) water paddle sports							
Sailing/windsurfing							
Power boating/waterskiing (all types)							
Winter sports (all skiing/snowboarding, sledding/ ice skating, outdoor hockey)							
Snowmobiling							
Attending outdoor fairs/festivals							
Attending outdoor concerts, plays, etc.							
Visiting historic sites/interpretive centers/ archeological sites/etc.							
Visiting parks, wilderness or primitive areas							
Visiting farms, wineries, agricultural venues, etc.							
Geo-caching/Orienteering							

What would you say is your FAVORITE outdoor recreation activity? Can be anything from boating, golfing, picnicking, camping, etc.

In which county in INDIANA do you MOST OFTEN participate in outdoor recreation activities?

_____ Outside Indiana _____

Now think of the ONE outdoor activity that you participate in the MOST. How do you PRIMARILY travel to that outdoor recreational destination?

- Walk/jog/run Car/truck Scooter Other
 Bike Motorcycle Horseback

Approximately how much money are you willing to spend per year on YOUR FAVORITE outdoor recreation activity? (Include cost of equipment, training, travel, etc.)

- Less than \$100 \$501-\$750 \$1501-\$2000 \$5001-\$7500
 \$101-\$250 \$751-\$1000 \$2001-\$3000 \$7501-\$10000
 \$251-\$500 \$1001-\$1500 \$3001-\$5000 More than \$10000

After first pursuing all possible Federal funds, grants & donations, which do you feel should be the OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES FOR FUNDING for the DEVELOPMENT of new outdoor recreation facilities? (SELECT ONLY ONE)

- State general taxes Local bond issue
 State tax on recreation equipment Facility use fee
 Land development fees/requirements Other
 Local taxes (county/city) None

After first pursuing all possible Federal funds, grants & donations, which do you feel should be the OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES FOR FUNDING for the OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE of existing outdoor recreation facilities? (SELECT ONLY ONE)

- State general taxes Local taxes (county/city)
 State tax on recreation equipment Other
 Facility use fee None

Approximately how far are you willing to travel (ONE WAY) to participate in your FAVORITE outdoor recreation activity?

- 0-5 miles 16-25 miles 51-75 miles
 6-10 miles 26-35 miles 76-100 miles
 11-15 miles 36-50 miles More than 100 miles

Which ONE of the following BEST describes the MAIN reason you do not participate in outdoor recreation MORE OFTEN. Please read ALL the answers and select only ONE.

- None-I participate as much as I want to
 There are no outdoor recreation facilities close to my home
 Customs/cultural barriers (family traditions, race or ethnic expectations, beliefs, etc.)
 Structural barriers (poor setting/physical environment, lack of facilities or programs, transportation, safety, etc.)
 Cost barriers (lack of money/economic factors)
 Social barriers (no one to participate with, family conflicts, responsibility to others, etc.)
 Personal barriers (no time, no motivation, lack of skills, physical/mental/emotional health, ability level, etc.)
 Disability-related access prevents me from participating as much as I would like

Do you or any of your immediate family members have any type of physical or intellectual disability that prevents you/them from participating in outdoor recreation activities?

- Yes No

If “YES” to the previous question, what type of disability do you/they have? (Select all that apply)

- Walking Hearing Lifting Other
 Seeing Breathing Bending

What is the MAIN reason you participate or would participate in outdoor recreation?

PLEASE READ ALL THE ANSWERS AND SELECT ONLY THE MAIN ONE.

- Mental Health (relaxation, stress reduction, meditation, spiritual renewal, etc.)
 Physical health
 To be with family/friends
 Volunteerism
 Educational opportunities
 Tourism
 Other

And finally, tell us about your immediate family:

What is your current marital status?

- Married Single-widowed Single-separated Other
 Single-never married Single-divorced Committed partnership

Which of the following do you consider yourself to be?

- White, non Hispanic Asian
 Black/African American Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 Hispanic/Latino Multi-racial
 American Indian/Alaska Native Other

How many family members live in your immediate household?

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

What are the ages of those living in your household that are under 18 years of age?

APPENDIX B

2025 Indiana State Trails Plan Survey

Thank you for participating in the 2025 Indiana State Trails Plan survey. Your feedback is invaluable as we work to shape the future of our state's trail infrastructure. This survey aims to gather your insights on statewide priorities for trail development, identify current funding sources, and understand your highest priorities for trail enhancement. The DNR's goal is to hear from trail managers, trail groups, and local government officials who play a role in trail development in their region. By ranking and providing your thoughts on various aspects, you'll help us better address community needs, improve connectivity, and ensure that our trail systems are effectively funded and developed. We appreciate your time and input in helping us build a more connected and accessible trail network for everyone.

1. How would you categorize your organization or affiliation?

- Local Unit of Government (City, Town, County)
- Nonprofit / Trail Group
- [Other]

2. Organization Name?

3. Which statewide priority should the State have for all trails? PLEASE RANK your answers from highest (most important) to lowest (least important), with 1 being the highest.

- _____ Push the overall state trails system (large projects, with regional scale)
- _____ Push local trail access (build more new, stand-alone small bits of local trail)
- _____ Push small-scale / local trail connectivity (connect bits of local trails together)

4. What are the funding sources you are CURRENTLY using for your trail system?

- Federal grants (RAISE; CMAQ; Transportation Alternatives; Etc.)
- State Grants (NLT, ITP, Harrison Trust, READI)
- Existing budgets/local money
- Private funding (Private foundations; Corporate funding; Etc.)
- Local level fundraising (Sponsorships; Naming rights; Individual donations; Individual Philanthropy)

5. Of the sources listed in question 4, which funding source has provided the most funds to develop your trail system?

- Federal grants (RAISE; CMAQ; Transportation Alternatives; Etc.)
- State Grants (NLT, ITP, Harrison Trust, READI)
- Existing budgets/local money
- Private funding (Private foundations; Corporate funding; Etc.)
- Local level fundraising (Sponsorships; Naming rights; Individual donations; Individual Philanthropy)

6. For your trail system; what are your highest priorities for trail development? PLEASE RANK your answers from highest (most important) to lowest (least important), with 1 being the highest.

- Connecting to INTERNAL community destinations (such as: schools, libraries, parks, etc.)
- Adding mileage to existing trails in your system for recreation
- Connecting to other trails outside your trail system or connecting to destinations OUTSIDE your community (such as: state parks, historical/cultural destinations, bigger cities, etc.)
- Networking your trail system to prioritize and improve routes for transportation and commuting purposes

7. In your opinion, how important is trail connectivity for the following:

(PLEASE RANK your answers from highest (most important) to lowest (least important), with 1 being the highest)

- Community economic development (such as: property values, tourism, business development)
- Personal health and wellness (for individual people)
- Environmental quality and sustainability
- Transportation and commuting corridors
- Community quality of life (such as: resident recruitment and retention, recreation opportunities, place-making)

8. How should state funding be allocated between trail rehabilitation/resurfacing projects and new trail construction? Please specify the percentage of the total budget you believe should be dedicated to each category

- 0% for trail rehabilitation/resurfacing and 100% for new trail construction
- 1-25% for trail rehabilitation/resurfacing and 75-99% for new trail construction
- 26-50% for trail rehabilitation/resurfacing and 50-74% for new trail construction
- 51-75% for trail rehabilitation/resurfacing and 25-49% for new trail construction
- 76-100% for trail rehabilitation/resurfacing and 0-24% for new trail construction

9. In the past 5 years, what challenges and problems is your trail system struggling with?

(Open-ended question; please list any challenges in any order)

APPENDIX C

Indiana Department of Natural Resources Trail Activity/Trail User Participation Survey

For purposes of this survey, trail activity is defined as any activity that you participate in that takes place on a linear corridor. Examples are walking or biking on a designated park trail system, off highway vehicle riding (4x4s, ATVs, dirt bikes, etc.) on designated properties and/or trails, in-line skating on a community trail or trail system, or canoeing/kayaking on a stream or water trail system.

IN INDIANA ONLY, during the past 12 months, how often did you participate in the following trail activities?

	More than once a week	Once a week	Twice a month	At least 1 time/month	At least 6 times per year	Once a year	Never
Using Trails For Alternative Transportation Routes							
Walking/Running/Jogging							
Hiking/Backpacking							
Bicycle Touring (Casual, Tour Or Both)							
Mountain Bike Riding							
In-Line Skating							
Cross Country Skiing							
Snowmobiling							
Off - Road Vehicle Riding (Motorcycle, 4-Wheel, Atv, Etc.)							
Canoeing/Kayaking On Water Trails Or Blueways							
Horseback Riding							

Which of the following would you like to participate in AT LEAST 12 TIMES PER YEAR IN THE FUTURE?

Select all that apply.

- Using trails for alternative transportation routes
- Walking/running/jogging
- Hiking/backpacking
- Bicycle touring (casual, tour or both)
- Cross country skiing
- Snowmobiling
- Off- road vehicle riding (motorcycle, 4-wheel, ATV,etc.)
- Canoeing/kayaking on water trails or blueways
- Mountain bike riding
- Horseback riding
- In-line skating
- None of these

Please indicate your TOP 3 reasons for using trails.

- Pleasure, relaxation, recreation, scenery
 Health-physical training
 Family or social outing(s)
 Safety – staying off roadways
 Commuting or travel
 Educational opportunities, natural environment
 Associated with volunteer opportunities (trail clean-up/maintenance, identifying trail problems, etc.)
 Other

Please indicate the TOP 3 ways you find out about trail opportunities.

- Trail websites
 Tourism websites
 Trail provider booklets/brochures
 Local tourism/community media (radio, television, etc.)
 Tourism/national media (radio, television, books, magazines, etc.)
 Organizational presentations (schools, Rotary, scouts, etc.)
 Special events (fairs, festivals, etc.)
 Word of mouth
 Signage at parks or other recreational facilities
 Other
 None

What is your PREFERRED trail surface? Please read ALL the answers & select ONLY ONE.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native soil (dirt) | <input type="checkbox"/> Compacted limestone screenings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gravel | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood chips |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt/Concrete | <input type="checkbox"/> No preference |

Considering the trail activities that you participate in, what is the top annual amount you would be willing to spend to participate in those activities? (Include cost of equipment, training, travel, etc.)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,501-\$5,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> More than \$10,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100-\$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,001-\$1,500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not participate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$501-\$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,001-\$10,000 | |

Considering the trail activities that you participate in, how far (ONE WAY) would you be willing to travel, in INDIANA, to participate in these activities?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> 16-25 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-75 miles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> 26-35 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> 76-100 miles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> 36-50 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 100 miles |

To better indicate Indiana's area of need, in which Indiana county do you MOST OFTEN participate in trail activity? _____

Is there a trail within 5 miles or 10 minutes of your home?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

The following 2 questions deal with trail connectivity. By this we mean a system of trails that connect to points of interest, such as businesses, neighborhoods, schools, recreation area and/or other trails.

Do you believe connecting trails should be an important part of your community’s infrastructure?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

How important do you believe trail connectivity is for:

	Extremely	Somewhat	Not very	Not at all	No opinion
Your communities economic development:					
Personal health and wellness:					
Community health and wellness:					
Environmental health and sustainability:					
Alternative transportation corridors:					

What are the MAIN reasons you DO NOT participate in trail activities as much as you would like?

Select all that apply.

- None-I do not use trails
- None – I participate as much as I want to
- There are no trails close to my home
- Customs/cultural barriers (family traditions, race or ethnic expectations, beliefs, etc.)
- Structural barriers (poor setting/physical environment: lack of facilities or programs, transportation, safety,etc.)
- Cost barriers (lack of money/economic factors)
- Social barriers (no one to participate with, family conflicts, responsibility to others, etc.)
- Personal barriers (no time, no motivation, lack of skills, physical/mental/emotional health, ability level, etc.)
- Disability-related trail access prevents me from participating as much as I would like

Please indicate if your trail activity is limited by any of the following health factors. (Select all that apply)

- Walking
- Hearing
- Physical ability to ride a bike
- Physical ability to ride a motorized off road vehicle
- Seeing
- Breathing
- Physical ability to ride a horse
- Physical ability to use a canoe/kayak
- Other

What trail improvements could be made to increase your use of trails? (Select all that apply)

- Better surface
- Easier slopes
- Other
- Guided trail activity
- Increased personal safety measures
- Improved visibility
- Walking, biking or riding clubs
- None

For each of the following, how well does the CURRENT supply of trails, in Indiana, meet your needs?

	Supply is more than enough	Supply is just right	Supply is OK for now but needs to be increased in the future	Supply does not meet my needs	Uncertain, don't know current supply	Don't use
Using trails for alternative transportation routes						
Walking/running/jogging						
Hiking/backpacking						
Bicycle touring (casual, tour or both)						
Mountain bike riding						
In-line skating						
Cross country skiing						
Snowmobiling						
Off-road vehicle riding (motorcycle, 4-wheel, ATV, etc.)						
Canoeing/kayaking on water trails or blueways						
Horseback riding						

After first pursuing all possible Federal funds, grants & donations, which do you feel should be the OTHER PRIMARY SOURCE FOR FUNDING for the DEVELOPMENT of new trails? (Select Only One)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State General taxes | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Taxes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State Tax on recreation equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail use fee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land development set-asides | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Bond issue | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

After first pursuing all possible Federal funds, grants & donations, which do you feel should be the OTHER PRIMARY SOURCE FOR FUNDING for the OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE of existing trails? (Select Only One)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State General taxes | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail use fee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State Tax on recreation equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Taxes | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

If the money was spent in your local area to help support TRAIL UPKEEP AND NEW TRAIL DEVELOPMENT, how much would you be willing to pay for an ANNUAL TRAIL FEE?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$5 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15.00 to \$19.99 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5.00 to \$9.99 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20.00 or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10.00 to \$14.99 | |

And finally, tell us about yourself:

Are you ... Male Female

What is your age? _____

In which Indiana county do you live? _____ **Do not live in Indiana** _____

Which of the following do you consider yourself to be?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White, non Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-racial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

APPENDIX D

Local Recreation Providers Survey – Ball State University

What zip codes represent the community served by your local parks and recreation system? Please note if your services reach statewide. _____

What is the ZIP code of your park and recreation system? _____

Which of the following best describes your role in local parks and recreation provision?

- Employee of County Parks and Recreation Department
- Employee of Township Parks and Recreation Department
- Employee of Municipal Parks and Recreation Department
- Affiliated with a Trail Department
- Other unit of local government (Street Department, Public Works)
- Member of County Park Board
- Member of Township Park Board
- Member of Municipal Park Board
- Member of “Friends of” group or similar (non-profit/nongovernmental management group)
- Other _____

Please indicate your primary role in the local parks and recreation system (superintendent, management, programming staff, facilities maintenance, park board chairperson, etc.) _____

Which of the following exist in your community? (Check all that apply.)

- Parks and Recreation Department
- Park Board (or Parks and Recreation Board)
- “Friends of Parks” group or similar (nongovernmental/non-profit parks or trails management group)
- Other agency that manages local public parks and recreation or trails:

Please explain: _____

Which units of government are involved with providing local parks and/or recreation opportunities to citizens in your community? Please check all that apply:

- County
- Municipal (City or Town)
- Township
- Other (please explain): _____

What is the population of your service area?

- 4,999 or less
- 5,000 to 9,999
- 10,000 to 49,999
- 50,000 to 149,000
- 150,000 or more
- Not Applicable

How many people, on average, do your facilities serve annually?

- Fewer than 100
 100 to 499
 500 to 999
 1,000 to 1,499
 1,500 to 1,999
 Greater than 2,000
 Not Applicable

What are the approximate total number of acres managed under the local park system? _____ acres

Of the following amenities, how many acres are used for recreation?

	Number of Acres
Forest	
Water bodies (e.g., ponds, lakes, wetlands)	
Open green space	
Other:	

How many miles of each are present in your service area?

	Length in Miles
Walking/Hiking Trails (paved)	
Walking/Hiking Trails (unpaved)	
Bicycle Trails	
Motorized Trails	
River Trails/ Greenway	
Equestrian Trails	
Other (please specify)	

Please indicate in the table below if the local park and recreation system has collaboration with other providers of recreational opportunities in the community.

	Yes	No
Privately-owned Neighborhood Parks in Subdivisions		
Private for Profit Providers		
Non-Profit Provider (e.g. YMCA)		
School Systems providing recreation		
State Properties		
Federal Properties		
Other		

What was the 2021 budget for your agency? _____

What was the total revenue earned by the local parks and recreation system in 2021? _____

Has your legally appropriated budget increased or decreased since the 2020 fiscal year? _____

Do you dedicate any percentage of your budget to ADA compliance?

- Yes. If yes, what percentage? _____
- No

What measures, in the last five years, have you taken to achieve ADA compliance (if any)?

What percent of the local tax base goes to the local parks and recreation department?

- <1%
- 1% - 2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%

How do you use non-reverting funds?

Please rank how money is allocated within your service area:

- _____ Personnel
- _____ Land Management
- _____ Expansion
- _____ Environmental Education
- _____ Promotion of Parks and Recreation
- _____ Parks and Recreation Activities

Please complete the following table about your local park system regarding facilities and services:

	Do you currently have this facility in the local park system?		Do you regularly provide programs with this facility?		Would you be willing to provide this service if it is not already present?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sports Fields (baseball, soccer, etc.)						
Playground						
Picnic Area						
Campground						
Hard surface courts (basketball, tennis, etc.)						
Skate Park						
Dog Park						
Swimming Pool/ Splash Pad						
Other: _____						

Please complete the following table about your local park system in regarding trails:

	Do you currently have this facility in the local park system?		Do you regularly provide programs with this facility?		Would you be willing to provide this service if it is not already present?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Multi Use Natural Surface Trail (bike/pedestrian & equine)						
Multi Use Natural Surface Trail (OHV, bike/pedestrian & equine)						
Nature/Interpretive Trail						
Connector Trails to Existing Trails						
Single Use Trail (any surface)						
ADA-compliant Accessible Trail						
Water Trails						
Greenway or other Paved Trail						
Other Trail: _____						

In the past year, what are the operation and maintenance costs for the following parks and recreation facilities in your park system?

	Annual Operation Cost	Annual Maintenance Cost
Sports Fields (baseball, soccer, etc)		
Playground		
Picnic Area		
Campground		
Hard surface courts (basketball, tennis, etc)		
Skate Park		
Dog Park		
Swimming Pool/ Splash Pad		
Other: _____		

In the last year, what are the operation and maintenance costs for the following facilities regarding trail systems?

	Annual Operation Cost	Annual Maintenance Cost
Multi Use Trail (bike/pedestrian & equine)		
Multi Use Trail (OHV, bike/pedestrian & equine)		
Nature/Interpretive Trail		
Connector Trails to Existing Trails		
Single Use Trail		
ADA-compliant Accessible Trail		
Water Trails		
Greenway or other Paved Trail		
Other: _____		

What percentage of the budget is set aside for the PREVENTIVE/SCHEDULED/EMERGENCY maintenance of the above aspects of the facility (please explain in the next question)?

	Percent of Budget
Preventive Maintenance (e.g. tightening bolts on play equipment, changing engine oil, etc.)	
Scheduled Maintenance (e.g. seasonal/yearly vehicle tune-ups; winter season machinery tear-downs, interior/exterior painting)	
Emergency Maintenance (e.g. broken water pipes, vandalism repair/clean-up)	

Please give examples of maintenance projects, schedules, etc. that you use:

Please indicate any measures you have taken in the past five years to address funding challenges with parks and recreation in your community:

	Funding Sources Tried/ Used	Funding Sources Planned (Future)	Not Used or Planned
Worked with Park Foundation			
Levied Taxes			
Bond Fund			
Engaged In Fundraising			
Approached Small Local Business For Funding			
Pursued Non-Park Foundations			
Closed Facilities			
Received Donations			
Applied For Grants			
Pursued Public-Private Partnership			
Sold Advertising Space To Local Businesses (Sponsorships)			
Private Funding For Naming Rights			
Other			

Please indicate any measures you have taken in the past five years to address staffing challenges with parks and recreation in your community:

	Funding sources tried/ used	Funding sources planned (future)	Not used or planned
Used/Increased Volunteers			
Worked with Friends Of Parks Groups			
Worked with Community Centers			
Worked with Youth Sports Leagues			
Partnering with Other Government Agencies			
Partnering with Local Education Programs			
Partnering with Local for Profit Agencies			
Local Business Donations of People/Staff Time			
Local Business Donations of Equipment			
Local Non-Profit Organizations			
Other			

Please indicate from the list below any measures you have taken in the past five years to address the need for land to expand the parks and recreation areas in your community:

	Funding sources tried/used	Funding sources planned (future)	Not used or planned
Land and Water Conservation Fund grant used to purchase land			
Partner with local schools for public use of their land or recreational facilities			
Utility corridors or Rights of Way			
Land Trust or other nonprofit landowners			
Conservation easement with other landowners			
Cooperation with private landowners			
Indiana Department of Natural Resources Grant programs (other than LWCF)			
Other			

Does your local park and recreation system have a system wide master plan?

- Yes, it was published in the year _____
- No

Do you plan to develop a local parks and recreation master plan in the next 5-10 years?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided

Please indicate the importance you and your organization place on the following:

	No Importance	Not Very important	Neutral	Important	Critical Importance
Trail Expansion					
Trail Maintenance					
Park Expansion					
Park Maintenance					
Signage and Interpretation					
Environmental Education					
Promoting Parks and Recreation					

Please tell us about the people who work within the parks and recreation system. Please indicate here if you would like to opt out of answering the demographic questions.

- Continue
- Opt Out

How long have you served in your current position? _____

What is your highest level of education attained?

- Less than high school degree
- Graduated High School Diploma
- Some college
- College Graduate
- Graduate School

Race/Ethnicity

- White, Nonhispanic (1)
- Hispanic (2)
- African American (3)
- Asian American (4)
- Native American (5)
- Mixed Race (6)
- Other (7) _____

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

Are you person with a disability?

- No
- Yes

Age _____

How many years have you worked in the parks and recreation profession (in years)? _____

How many staff people in the parks system fall in to the following ages?

Ages	Number of People
15-20	
21-30	
31-40	
41-50	
51-60	
61-70	
71 or older	

How likely are you to participate in a survey similar to this in the future?

	1	2	3	4	5
Not very likely : Highly likely					

Please provide any additional comments you have regarding this survey and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) _____

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