

Natural Resources Commission

Commissioner Information Packet

Agenda Item: Water Resource Management authorities and funding partnerships to advance statutory duties under IC 14-25-7 and eligible uses of the Water Resources Development Fund under IC 14-25-2-4

Meeting date: 10am - October 7, 2025

Location the Garrison, Benjamin Harrison State Park

Executive Summary

Action requested. Approve acceptance and administration of funding from The Nature Conservancy to support the Commission's statutory duties under IC 14-25-7-11 and authorize the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water, to implement a defined scope of stakeholder engagement and technical planning activities consistent with IC 14-25-7-12 and complementary uses of the Water Resources Development Fund under IC 14-25-2-4.

Purpose. The acceptance enables DNR to convene up to six regional stakeholder meetings and retain a professional facilitator, with the goal of informing the Statewide Water Inventory and Management Plan called for by Executive Order 2563. The meetings will solicit input on statewide planning framework options, water monitoring network expansion, and practical use of water- resource data to inform regional management goals. See Attachment A, the September 10, -2025 letter requesting TNC assistance and funding.

Outcome. Timely delivery of a statewide, stakeholder--informed work product that advances:

1. a continuing assessment of water availability,
2. an inventory of significant withdrawal uses, and
3. planning for development, conservation, and beneficial use of water.

See IC 14-25-7-11.

Recommendation. Adopt the motion below to accept the fund.

Proposed Motion

I Move that the Natural Resources Commission accepts and authorizes the administration of the offered funds from The Nature Conservancy.

Background and Context

1) The request to The Nature Conservancy and TNC's agreement

The attached letter from IDNR to TNC, dated September 10, 2025 and signed by Deputy Director Ryan Mueller, requests technical advice and assistance from TNC for the

Statewide Water Inventory and Management Plan pursuant to Executive Order 25-63. The request includes TNC funding and planning assistance for a series of up to six regional stakeholder meetings, the use of a professional facilitator, and documentation of stakeholder input. The letter anticipates meetings at DNR properties in northern, central, and southern Indiana beginning in October 2025 and ending by August 2026 and seeks TNC guidance informed by national experience. TNC has agreed to the request. Attachment A summarizes the ask and schedule.

2) NRC duties and powers that support this action

- Duties. The Commission shall 1) conduct a continuing assessment of water availability, 2) take and maintain an inventory of significant uses of water, and 3) plan for development, conservation, and use of the water resource for beneficial uses. [IC 14-25-7-11](#).
- Powers. The Commission may accept and administer money from any source to aid in carrying out Chapter 7 and may exercise additional authority necessary to carry out the chapter. [IC 14-25-7-12](#).
- Related requirement. The Department shall compile and map community public water supplies serving at least 500 customers and update at least once every five years. [IC 14-25-7-13\(d\)](#).
- Funding tool. The Water Resources Development Fund is a revolving fund for reservoir development and improvement, investigations of availability, watershed protection, river enhancement, the compilation and mapping required by IC 14-25-7-13(d), and operation of the Division of Water. The Department administers the fund. [IC 14-25-2-4](#).
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3) Scope to be delivered with TNC support

The stakeholder engagement will produce inputs necessary to update the statewide assessment and planning deliverables required by **IC 14-25-7-11** and to support the compilation and mapping required by **IC 14-25-7-13(d)**. The professional facilitator will ensure consistent agendas, participation, and documentation. Outputs will include meeting notes, a statewide synthesis, and a recommendations memo.

4) Partnership history for context

DNR and TNC have a long record of joint conservation outcomes. Examples include the Healthy Rivers Initiative with projects approaching 70,000 acres, which is approximately 28,328 hectares, the 3,950 acre Busseron Creek Fish and Wildlife Area, which is approximately 1,598 hectares, habitat projects supported by the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust and the Next Level Conservation Trust, work in the Grand Calumet River Area of Concern in northwest Indiana, and the re-establishment of Franklin's ground squirrels at TNC's Kankakee Sands near Morocco. These examples illustrate capacity to deliver at scale.

Fiscal considerations

Total dollar value from TNC. Up to \$100,000

Use of Water Resources Development Fund. The Commission may direct the Department to apply WRDF for eligible complementary tasks in [IC 14-25-2-4\(e\)](#), including investigations of availability and needs, watershed protection, river enhancement, and the community water-supply compilation and mapping in [IC 14-25-7-13\(d\)](#).

Financial administration. Upon acceptance, the Department will deposit and account for TNC funds in an appropriate fund consistent with state fiscal policies and will execute any necessary agreement or MOU to implement the scope.

Conclusion

Accepting and administering philanthropic funds under IC 14-25-7-12 to accomplish the Commission's duties under IC 14-25-7-11 is legally authorized and operationally advantageous. Eligible expenditures from the Water Resources Development Fund can be used to complement philanthropic dollars for investigations, protection and enhancement, and the required compilation and mapping.

Appendix. Selected Authority and Program References

IC 14-25-7-11 Duties of commission

<https://iga.in.gov/laws/2025/ic/titles/14/articles/25/chapters/7/sections/11>

IC 14-25-7-12 Powers of commission

<https://iga.in.gov/laws/2025/ic/titles/14/articles/25/chapters/7/sections/12>

IC 14-25-7-13 Inventory; compilation and mapping of community public water supplies

<https://iga.in.gov/laws/2025/ic/titles/14/articles/25/chapters/7/sections/13>

IC 14-25-2-4 Water resources development fund; uses and administration

<https://iga.in.gov/laws/2025/ic/titles/14/articles/25/chapters/2/sections/4>