



# McCormick's Creek State Park Interpretive Master Plan, 2009

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# Introduction

McCormick's Creek State Park is Indiana's first state park, dedicated in 1916, the state's centennial. Interpretation was an early component of the visitor experience at McCormick's Creek and set the trend for the future of the interpretive service.

In addition to the park's approaching centennial in 2016, other factors make this a good time for an interpretive plan.

- In the fall of 2009, the Nature Center completed a comprehensive exhibit overhaul. The exhibits were professionally designed and constructed and tell the park's story in a logical progression of separate galleries. The new exhibits need to be promoted and marketed to new audiences.
- The Peden home site has had a recent facelift. Dense vegetation has been cleared, revealing a wonderful opportunity for interpreting the home, spring house and barn.
- Changes in program demographics have been noted, such as in traditional and home schooled students; participation from the Canyon Inn; and a decline in traditional program attendance in favor of special events all point to a need for evaluation and assessment.

This plan provides some long-term direction as well as addressing immediate needs. Recommendations are phased and prioritized.

As the park approaches its 100th anniversary, it is time to consider potential new directions and look ahead to the future.

# Resource Overview

## I. Natural History

### A. Geology

1. *Limestone.* McCormick's Creek State Park is in a region of the state noted for its limestone. Roughly 250 million years ago, the area was covered with a large, shallow, warm sea. Sand and lime deposits formed at the ocean bottom and were compressed into layers of solid limestone.

Three limestone formations are exposed at McCormick's Creek. The lowest and oldest of the three is the Salem limestone formation. It is seen as an outcrop along the creek as it approaches its confluence with the White River. The next formation is the St. Louis formation. It constitutes most of the canyon walls, beginning below the falls. Above the falls is the St. Genevieve formation, the youngest formation.

Fossils of marine life are abundant, especially in the St. Louis and St. Genevieve formations. Crinoids, bryozoans, brachiopods and corals are represented.

2. *Karst.* McCormick's Creek State Park falls within the Karst region of southern Indiana. This region is typified by caves, sinkholes and resurgent streams. The features are the result of water dissolving the limestone bedrock. McCormick's Creek State Park has Wolf Cave, Twin Bridges (the remains of a cave collapse) and numerous sinkholes, resurgent streams and blind valleys.

3. *Glacial influences.* The Illinoian glacier (220,000 years ago) and the Wisconsin glacier (ending 15,000 years ago) both influenced Indiana. The Illinoian glacier passed near the park, but did not bury it. The Wisconsin glacier reached its most southern advance north of the park.

While glaciers did not cover the park, McCormick's Creek still felt their influence. The path of the White River was carved from glacial meltwater. The canyon may have been carved by a heavy torrent of meltwater.



## B. Water

1. *Creek.* McCormick's Creek originates near Ellettsville, approximately 7.5 miles upstream from its confluence with the White River. The confluence and final 1.5 miles are within the park boundary. The creek bisects the park and is crossed by two road bridges. After a heavy rain or thaw, the creek is impossible to cross except by the bridges. During dry spells, it may be crossed on foot at several points. The falls mark the ending of the upstream St. Genevieve limestone and the beginning of the canyon which is St. Louis limestone.
2. *White River.* The White River forms the western boundary of McCormick's Creek State Park and is a major Indiana river. The west and east forks are 273 and 162 miles respectively. The path of the White River was formed as the glaciers receded. Meltwater gushed from the glaciers, carving through the sand, gravel and other glacial debris.



## C. Plant Communities

1. *Historic conditions.* The 1816 survey notes for the area describe the land as “rolling; good farming; beech, sugar (maple), poplar”. The forest type was predominantly beech-maple.
2. *Present Conditions.* McCormick's Creek remains a wooded park. The woods have returned after being cleared for timber and farming. More recent park additions contain younger forests and old field.

Community types include:

- a. *Forested Upland.* This forest type includes beech, sugar maple, tulip poplar, red oak and white ash. This forest type covers much of the park. Spring wildflowers are abundant. Over 350 wildflower species have been documented in the park.
  - b. *Floodplain Forest.* The floodplain forest is made up of sycamore, green ash, silver maple and elm. This forest is found along the creek and river floodplain.
  - c. *Pines.* A pine stand, planted by the CCC, is located near the firetower. It contains white, red, jack and pitch pine.
  - d. *Early successional and developed.* Grasslands and old fields from more recently farmed land acquisitions are included as well as maintained recreational areas.
3. *Invasive Species.* Established invasive plants in the park include: Japanese honeysuckle, vinca, ailanthus, bush honeysuckle, lespedeza and multiflora rose.

## D. Fauna

Inventories of the park dating back to the 1930s are available in the Resource Management Plan and at the Nature Center.

Of note:

1. *Birds.* Black vultures were reported nesting in the canyon in the 1930s. They were absent from the area for decades, but are now seen again. Cerulean warblers are another rare species seen at McCormick's Creek State Park.
2. *Mammals.* The mammals found at the park are those commonly found throughout the area. Raccoon, gray and fox squirrel, woodchuck, skunk, cottontail rabbit, red fox, grey fox, coyote and species of mice, voles and shrews are present.

White-tailed deer were abundant to the point that periodic controlled hunts are conducted to reduce their numbers.

## II. Cultural History

### A. Indigenous People

There is evidence of two pre-historic sites within the park, one near the Redbud Shelter and another near the mouth of McCormick's Creek.

The region was at one time settled by Miami, Delaware, Potawatomi and Eel River Indians. They may have hunted or had temporary camps along the White River or McCormick's Creek.

### B. European Settlement

1. *McCormick.* In 1816, John McCormick purchased the land that included the creek. A Revolutionary War veteran, McCormick acquired the land as payment for his service to his cash-poor but land-rich young country. John would never visit the land, but three of his children lived there. Two of his sons, Thomas and Hudson operated mills on the creek.
2. *Peden.* John McCormick's daughter, Nancy, married Jesse Peden and together they farmed her portion of land. Their farm included what is now the Deer Run and Redbud Shelter areas. The Pedens had a log home and barn. Their son, Tom, took over the farm and in 1857 built a large barn with limestone supports and



huge hickory beams. The Pedens raised livestock and grew wheat. The barn stood for many years and the limestone supports are still standing.

3. *Others.* The land that makes up the park was a patchwork of small farms, some of which changed hands several times. Homes were located near Beech Grove Shelter (Artemus Pratt), the falls (Sidney Hendrick), falls parking lot (Marion Laymon), the property manager's residence (Dunn), and the campgrounds (Harrison Bean). A schoolhouse was located near the stone arch bridge.

### C. Statehouse Quarry

Beginning in 1878, a limestone quarry operated on what is now park property. The Statehouse Quarry supplied stone for the construction of the new capitol building in Indianapolis. Stone from the quarry was used for the foundation and basement of the capitol building. In addition to the quarry, 13 buildings were located at the site and included housing for quarry workers. When in operation, the quarry employed 50-75 workers.



Limestone taken from the quarry was loaded onto railroad cars and transported across the White River to Indianapolis. Remains of the railroad trestle across the White River are visible. A bridge foundation at the creek near the quarry is also visible.

The late 1800s and early 1900s were a boom for the limestone industry in Indiana. New technology in cutting stone, railroads to transport the heavy material and a preference for fire-resistant building materials after the Chicago Fire all played a part in the boom.



### D. Frederick Denkewalter

In 1880, Dr. Frederick Denkewalter, a Prussian immigrant, purchased 90 acres of the McCormick tract. A physician and minister, Denkewalter was also an entrepreneur. During this time, health spas and sanitariums were popping up throughout the state. The therapeutic benefits of natural settings, rest and healthy diet made McCormick's Creek a destination for many. Denkewalter would expand both his acreage and his sanitarium, eventually owning over 500 acres. He later opened a second sanitarium in Spencer. Denkewalter died in 1914.

### E. Park History

1. *First Park.* When Frederick Denkewalter died, his land was put up for auction. At this time Indiana was anticipating its centennial. In honor of the event, a first state park

was to be created. Turkey Run was targeted, but the deal went sour at the last moment. The organizers, including Colonel Richard Lieber, then turned their attention to McCormick's Creek. Owen County raised a portion of the purchase and the state contributed the remainder. On May 25, 1916, McCormick's Creek became the first state park. Turkey Run would become the second state park later that same year.

2. *Interpretation.* In 1923, artist Lucy Pitschler led informal hikes throughout the park during her vacation there. For the next three summers she returned and shared her knowledge of nature with an increasing number of participants. In 1926, the state paid her expenses and the Interpretive Service was born. Other parks followed McCormick's Creek's lead. By 1941, eight parks offered interpretive programs.

The continuous presence of interpreters is reflected not only in programs, but in the decades of inventories of the park's flora and fauna. This information is extremely valuable in determining changes in ecosystems and resource management solutions.

## F. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

When the park was created, it lacked basic infrastructure and amenities. The onset of the Great Depression made park improvements infeasible. The creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933 not only provided jobs for the many unemployed workers, but furthered the park significantly. CCC boys built trails, roads and a water system. The CCC also built the front gatehouse, several shelters, the firetower and the stone arch bridge. Although the CCC tenure at McCormick's Creek was a brief 18-month stint, Co. 589 played an important role in developing the park's infrastructure. The work these young men accomplished ultimately laid the path by which future visitors would interact with the park and its natural resources.



## G. Works Projects Administration (WPA)

The WPA along with the Civilian Conservation Corps was a New Deal program. As with the CCC, the WPA was created during the Great Depression to provide jobs for the unemployed and new construction projects and service to struggling communities.

The WPA had a presence in Indiana and at McCormick's Creek from 1935 to 1938. Among their projects:

1. Tree planting
2. CCC camp torn down with the exception of the Recreation Hall
3. Recreation Hall converted into Nature Museum
4. Tennis Courts
5. Additional cabins at Camp Friendly
6. Amphitheater
7. Falls stairway



# Existing Conditions

## I. Audiences

### A. Public

The general public represented 74.4% of the 2008 program attendance. This includes those attending special events. Following a statewide trend, attendance at traditional scheduled hikes and talks has declined although live animal programs are still popular. Advertised critter feeding times have been successful.

### B. Schools

School group numbers have declined slightly, but are still a major audience at McCormick's Creek. New teachers are still coming as older repeat teachers are retiring. Part of this can be attributed to the park's close proximity to large school districts and the affluence of those districts. It is also due to the feeling of importance and history the park holds within the community.

The decline in schools is most felt in the overnight multiple-day outings, where the group camp is reserved. This can be attributed at the time of this writing to the down-turn in the economy and resultant budget cuts in many school systems. Day trips by schools has remained stable.

Homeschoolers and their associations are a new audience. The interpretive service has developed programs especially for this audience. This includes a weekly homeschool program that runs for six consecutive weeks.

### C. Other

Attendance by groups such as scouts and churches fluctuates, but has experienced an overall decline.

## II. Facilities for Interpretation

### A. Nature Center

The interpretive service is headquartered at the Nature Center. The Nature Center has a large exhibit area, program room, offices and storage. Many of the programs and hikes originate at the Nature Center.

In 2009, the Nature Center completed an exhibit overhaul. The new exhibits tell the story of the park through a series of galleries including: Geology, Ice Age, Flora and Fauna, Cultural History, Civilian Conservation Corps and the Naturalist Cabin. In addition to the exhibits, several small spaces were created where formal and informal programs and activities can take place.

## **B. Canyon Inn**

The inn contains a variety of meeting rooms, and is used by speakers during special events. Speakers conduct programs at the Wildflower Weekend. Many hikes originate from the front steps of the inn, especially destination hikes related to the CCC, firetower, quarry or the inn itself.

## **C. Trails**

The destination trails are used the most frequently for interpretation. These would include trails to the quarry, falls, firetower, White River and Wolf Cave.

The geography of the park with the creek bisecting the park is both an advantage and disadvantage. The creek is lovely and offers geology and aquatic program opportunities. It also divides the park into two separate halves with few crossing points. Hikes on the north of the creek generally start from the Nature Center. Hikes on the south side of the creek start from the Canyon Inn.

Two road bridges cross the creek. The trails that cross the creek are frequently impassable due to the water level. Trail 10 is an example of a trail seldom used for programs due to its unpredictability.

## **D. Amphitheater**

The large CCC amphitheater has a stage and is designed for large venues. It is reserved by the park for special events and performances. Groups using the adjacent group camp regularly reserve the amphitheater for their presentations, church services, etc. The amphitheater is not in use every night of the busy season.



## **E. CCC Recreation Hall**

The CCC Recreation Hall is an historic structure that has recently been restored. It is a reservable shelter. The park uses the shelter for CCC programs and as a stop during CCC tours, and for special events.

## **F. Shelters**

Several large shelters are available for special events if reserved by the park. Redbud and Pine Bluff shelters are the most frequently used because of their close proximity to the Nature Center. Pine Bluff is located at one of the few open areas in the park, so is good for astronomy events.

The Beech Grove Shelter is a beautiful CCC structure located in the campgrounds. It works well for the campground audience. People attending the program from the inn or elsewhere must park at the campground office and walk to the shelter. For this reason, Beech Grove Shelter is used selectively for programs such as outdoor cooking, or bird hikes to that portion of the park. The shelter is also used for informal activities on busy weekends when the campgrounds are full.

### **III. Staff**

#### **A. Interpretive Staff**

In 2008, the interpretive staff consisted of:

1. *One full-time interpreter position.*
2. *Two seasonal interpreter positions.* These are full-time May through October and part-time during April, November and December.
3. *One seasonal receptionist, May through October, three days/week.* This position is not funded every year.

#### **B. Volunteers**

1. *Friends Group.* This group has provided volunteers primarily for special events and special projects.
2. *Student Interns.* Interns conduct programs and do roving interpretation. They have not been an option every year.
3. *Campground Hosts.* Campground hosts have maintained bulletin boards and volunteered at the nature center.
4. *Other.* Photographers and performers have volunteered their expertise for programs and services.

### **IV. Interpretative Programs**

#### **A. Public Programs**

In 2008, the public represented 74% of program attendance. This was in large part from special events. Traditional public hikes and talks contributed to a smaller portion of this figure. A summer Nature Camp program, offered to the public also contributed to the pub-

lic attendance figure.

Almost all programming is conducted within the park. The few off-site presentations were more promotional or public relations in nature than interpretive.

## **B. Special Events**

Special events, all open to the public, are successful in terms of attendance figures. Examples of such events includes:

1. *Concert Series.* Musical, theatrical or other cultural arts presentations such as Arts in the Park and Barbeque and Blues.
2. *Volunteer days.* Examples include bluebird trail monitoring, feeder watch, garlic mustard pull, Christmas bird count
3. *Topical Events.* Wildflower Weekend, Wild About Wildlife, Archaeology Day, Haunted Trail
4. *Fitness.* 5K Run/Walk

## **C. Roving Interpretation**

Most roving interpretation occurs at the Nature Center, with some also occurring at the nearby swimming pool.

## **D. Workshops**

Workshops by definition are those requiring registration and involve creating or building a take-home object. Examples of workshops conducted at McCormick's Creek include: kite making, gourd birdhouse making and creating milk jug skeletons.

## **E. Schools**

School groups represented 13.9% of the overall program attendance. Traditional school attendance has been supplemented recently by an increase in home schooled groups. A multiple-session series was offered specifically for home schooled students.

## **V. Interpretive Media**

### **A. Nature Center Exhibits**

In 2009, new exhibits were completed for the Nature Center. The comprehensive project was contracted out to one primary exhibit company with subcontractors creating dioramas and graphic panels.

The exhibits were created following a design created by a professional design company several years previous. The exhibits lead visitors through galleries: Geology, Ice Age, Flora and Fauna, Cultural and Park History, Civilian Conservation Corps and the Naturalist Cabin.

### **B. Wayside Exhibits**

Wayside exhibits were completed under a 2006-2009 Quantity Purchase Award. Signs completed under the QPA can be found at: Wolf Cave (2), the falls, the stone arch bridge, CCC Recreation Center, firetower and the Peden Barn. Additionally, the park installed resource management signs covering the topics of: deer management, park resource management, campground wildlife and prescribed burns.

### **C. Brochures**

Current interpretive brochures include:

1. *A self-guided habitat trail brochure.* The trail forms a loop around the Nature Center.
2. *Wolf Cave brochure.* This brochure provides information and a map of the cave. Due to the white-nose syndrome spreading through bats, Wolf Cave is closed at present. The brochure has ceased distribution pending re-opening of the cave.
3. *Generic topical brochures.* More informational than interpretive, these state-wide brochures cover topics such as wildflowers, trees and birds.

### **D. Bulletin Boards**

Eleven bulletin boards are stationed throughout the park. Each bulletin board contains general information as well as an interpretive theme. The themes relate to the bulletin board locations (falls, wolf cave, Canyon Inn) or are seasonal.

### **E. Videos and DVDs, etc.**

IDNR productions are available for viewing. They are available any time, but have been popular on rainy days. People choose a selection and the interpreter shows them.

# Partnerships

## I. **Friends of McCormick's Creek State Park (FMCSPP)**

The FMCSPP is a volunteer group which develops and conducts programs and projects for the park. Additionally, they raise money for interpretive functions. Among their programs and projects:

- A. **Owen County Wildflower Weekend**
- B. **Arts in the Park**
- C. **Garlic mustard pull**
- D. **Bluebird box monitoring**
- E. **Haunted Trail/Fall-o-ween**
- F. **Monetary contributions to special events, wayside exhibits**
- G. **Peden Barn site improvement**

## II. **Owen County Family YMCA**

The park and the YMCA conduct a 5K Run/Walk at the park.

## III. **White River Valley Archaeology Association**

This organization assists with the archaeology special events by conducting programs and setting up displays.

## IV. **Owen County Middle School**

The middle school collects and records aquatic data as part of the Riverwatch program.

## V. **WildCare Inc.**

This wildlife rehab organization conducts live animal presentations at the park.

## **VI. Wildflower Weekend Partners**

Several organizations contribute to this large special event. Among them are:

- A. Owen County Soil and Water Conservation District**
- B. Owen-Putnam Forest**
- C. Monroe County Parks and Recreation**
- D. Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society**
- E. Sassafras Audubon Society**

## **VII. Canyon Inn**

The Canyon Inn provides refreshments, supplies and meeting rooms for special events. They also provide prizes such as meal coupons.

# Regional Offerings

McCormick's Creek is in a region that includes a large percentage of the state's public land. As a result, there are several options for those looking for an outdoor experience. Additionally, many of the park visitors are from Bloomington, which is located within an easy drive of the various properties.

## I. Department of Natural Resources

- A. Spring Mill State Park, Mitchell.** This state park features a pioneer village, several caves and the Gus Grissom Memorial. There is a nature center and full-time interpreter. The park has a full-service inn as well as campgrounds.
- B. Brown County State Park, Nashville.** This is the state's largest state park and is located in the Norman Upland, an area noted for steep slopes, narrow ridgetops and fall color. There is a nature center and full-time interpreter. The park has a full-service inn, cabins and campgrounds.
- C. Monroe Reservoir, Bloomington.** The Corps of Engineers manages the reservoir and the DNR manages the surrounding property. The reservoir has campgrounds and a seasonal interpreter. Boating, fishing and waterskiing are popular. Marinas and other amenities are available on the lake.
- D. Cataract Falls/Cagles Mill Reservoir, Cloverdale.** The lake provides water activities as well as hiking, camping, nature center and full-time interpretive services.
- E. Yellowwood State Forest, Nashville.** This state forest has campgrounds, hiking and hunting. A small lake provides fishing and a rowboat rental. Horse trails and a horse-man's camp are maintained.
- F. Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Martinsville.** The forest provides hiking, hunting, camping and two small fishing lakes.
- G. Owen-Putnam State Forest, Spencer.** Owen-Putnam provides hiking, hunting, horse trails and fishing in several ponds.

## II. Non-Department of Natural Resources

- A. Wonderlab, Bloomington.** Wonderlab is a children's science museum. The exhibits are related to physical and natural sciences and are all interactive. Staff and docents conduct programs at the site as well as outreach programs.
- B. Monroe County Parks, Bloomington.** Monroe County is the county east of Owen County. They maintain several parks. Flat Woods, which is near the Owen County line,



offers natural areas and trails. A full-time interpreter for the county conducts programs and events at the park.

- C. Bloomington Parks and Recreation, Bloomington.** In addition to sports and recreation programs, Bloomington Parks maintains two large natural parks. Griffy Lake and Leonard Springs offer hiking trails, wayside signs and regular programs.
- D. Hoosier National Forest, Bedford.** The northernmost extreme of the Hoosier National Forest begins just south of Bloomington and abuts the Monroe Reservoir. This district includes campgrounds, hunting, fishing and an interpretive center at Hardin Ridge. During the spring and summer, a limited number of interpretive programs are offered.
- E. Owen County YMCA, Spencer.** The local YMCA offers camps and youth activities at a location close to the park. Additionally, they have an indoor pool. At present the McCormick's Creek pool is still the only outdoor public pool in Owen County.
- F. The Nature Conservancy, Indianapolis.** The Nature Conservancy maintains a preserve near McCormick's Creek State Park. Green's Bluff is a 563-acre preserve and has hiking trails through woods, riparian areas and past the remnants of a mill.
- G. Owen County Library, Spencer.** The library offers programs and activities for children, teens and adults.
- H. Other.** Bloomington, the home of Indiana University is rich in festivals. It is a draw for music, art and restaurants. Lotus Fest, for example, is a multiple-day festival with concurrent international music performances. Musicians come from all over the world. The 4<sup>th</sup> Street Art Fair is another popular event. It is held each Labor Day and draws thousands of visitors and artists from the Midwest.

# Themes

*McCormick's Creek State Park's geology, abundant resources and scenic beauty made it desirable for early settlers, entrepreneurs, park visionaries and for today's visitors.*

## **Subthemes**

### **A. Geology**

1. The park's limestone bedrock is responsible for the caves, sinkholes and other features.
2. The karst topography results in unique subterranean water systems and ecosystems.
3. Glacial meltwater cut the McCormick's Creek canyon and formed the path of the White River.
4. The Statehouse Quarry represented an era when Indiana's Salem limestone began to be used all over the country.

### **B. Natural Resources**

1. Dense forests provided food and shelter for abundant wildlife.
2. The creeks and White River provided water for drinking, washing and to power mills.
3. Early farmers cleared the timber and created productive farms on the land.
4. Managing the park's natural resources is an ongoing task.

### **C. Scenic Beauty**

1. The therapeutic benefits of the park were recognized by sanitarium owner Frederick Denkwalter.
2. The large acreage and scenic beauty led to McCormick's Creek becoming the first state park.
3. The Civilian Conservation Corps helped to restore damaged areas and create a park.

# Recommendations

## I. Peden Barn and Home Site

Extensive brush clearing from the Peden site by the Friends group has greatly increased its interpretive value. Huge limestone pillars mark the outline where the barn once stood. The spring house and home foundation are close by. The three features make this a great destination and program topic.

### ***Recommendations:***

**A. Archaeological Assessment.** The site is fragile. In particular the stonework has settled and or is leaning. One pillar has fallen over. Stonework on the spring house is bowing in. Before the site can be promoted for visitation, it needs to be assessed by experts in this area. ***Recommendations for public safety and site safety must be incorporated before proceeding with other interpretive recommendations.***

### **B. Trails.**

1. *Spur from Trail 9.* Trail 9 is a loop trail that begins and ends at the Deer Run Shelter. It is the trail closest to the Peden site. A spur trail would connect Trail 9 to the Peden Barn site.
2. *Trail from Nature Center.* At present, access to the Peden site is via a horse trail (off limits to pedestrians when the Saddle Barn is in operation). Trail 9 is the closest trail, but would need a spur to reach the Peden site (see above). Both of these access routes originate from the Deer Run picnic areas.

The Nature Center is the launching point for most interpretive walks north of the creek. A straight line to the Peden site from the Nature Center is less than .5 miles. The most direct route would travel behind the pool, past the first loop of the Deer Run picnic area. This portion could be a continuation of the paved Trail 8. From there, the trail would cross the horse trail and travel parallel to the horse trail until reaching the Peden site. (*see map page 16*)

3. *Site Trail.* At the site, a short loop would connect the barn with the spring house and the home.

### **C. Media.**

1. *Signs.* In 2008, a sign was created about the barn and Peden family. Two other signs would be placed along the site trail at the spring house and home. These smaller signs would explain the function of the spring house and features of the home. The signs would be mounted with base plates to prevent any site disturbance.



- Falls to Bridge Trail
- Existing Bridge to Pool/Nature Center Connection
- Nature Center to Peden Site Trail
- Trail 9 spur to Peden Barn
- Trail 9

2. *Brochure.* In addition to the signs, a self-guided brochure would be distributed at the Nature Center. The brochure could get into more depth about the Peden family, their land and farming methods of early Indiana.

#### **D. Programs.**

1. *Incorporating Peden Story.* Programming could be enhanced with Peden-related activities or demonstrations at the Peden site or the Nature Center. Pioneer foods, draft horse demonstrations, music, threshing demonstrations or other early Indiana lifestyle programming are possibilities. This could become an event on a larger scale (such as during the 2016 Bicentennial), or on a small scale during a hike such as providing corn bread samples at the farm site.
2. *Nancy Peden Fitness Walk.* Nancy Peden regularly walked to the White River to sell her butter and eggs to passing flatboats. An annual walk would replicate this route to the river and back. At the river, a snack of hard-boiled eggs and buttered bread or other period food could be enjoyed. The focus of the walk would be on the history of the time and the amount of walking that people were required to do.

Legend has it that Nancy was chased by a pack of wolves while carrying a basket of laundry past Wolf Cave. This could be developed into a fitness walk/run (with or without laundry basket). The interpretive component would tie in the themes of early Indiana wildlife, frontier chores and transportation before the automobile.

#### ***Recommendations at a Glance:***

1. Archaeological assessment of the site (required before any work is done to the land).
2. Trail from the Nature Center to the site
3. Short loop trail at the site
4. Sign identifying spring house
5. Sign identifying home
6. Self-guided brochure about the Peden Family and site
7. Including Peden site as larger historical event
8. Nancy Peden fitness walk

## **II. Canyon Inn**

Collaborative interpretive programming between the park and the inn has been cyclical. Availability of programming space, demand for programming and staff turnover have all been

factors attributing to these fluctuations. Opportunities for enhancing the existing programming exist.

***Recommendations:***

- A. Training with Inn staff.** Inn staff in the dining room, at the front desk and in housekeeping are frequently the park representatives with the most public contact. They are the most likely to get questions about the park, its natural and cultural history, and activities available.

The interpretive staff should provide training to all inn staff on the park natural and cultural history. Training would include a driving tour of the park to point out features and trailheads. All staff should go through the exhibits to familiarize themselves with the geology, flora, fauna and history of the park. Training would also include a discussion of Frequently Asked Questions and an overview of activities available at the park.

- B. Liaison/Communication with Inn Administration.** Collaborative programs between the inn and the interpretive service have fluctuated over the decades. Changes in the number of programs are influenced by several factors. An increase in use of the inn as a conference site decreases the availability of meeting rooms and an audience. Staff turnover at the inn and the nature center also contributes to increases and decreases. Individuals from the inn and/or from the nature center have spearheaded their own specialized projects. Once they leave, others evaluate and make changes.

It is a good time to initiate formalized planning sessions with the inn. The goal of these meetings would be to identify needs, constraints and opportunities. Coordinating calendars and identifying “down” times at the inn when an interpretive program could draw more visitors to the inn for a meal or for an overnight stay would benefit both the inn and the nature center.

- C. Media.** The Canyon Inn has an interesting history. The site has been a farmhouse, sanitarium and park inn. An interpretive brochure, available at the front desk, would provide information about this historic building.

- D. Inn Recreation Center.** The Canyon Inn includes a recreation building. During the busy season, a private concessionaire schedules and conducts activities, games and crafts. The building was once a pool house, built by the Department of Conservation (now DNR). The pool was later filled in and a new pool constructed closer to the inn.

Working with the concessionaire and the inn, the Recreation Center could provide a satellite location for interpretive programs. Its location on the south side of the creek is in close proximity to the inn, the cabins and the group camp. It would complement the Nature Center, which is on the north side of the creek and closer to the campgrounds.

The Recreation Center would provide an indoor gathering place for large groups during the school year (such as from the Group Camp) as well as a space for activities. Program props could be stored there and the walls would be decorated with graphics that can be used during pre-hike introductions.

This recommendation would include close planning with the concessionaire, the inn and, depending on the extent of the programming, the possible addition of interpretive staff. Based upon staff, funding and coordination with the inn, this recommendation could be as simple as providing an alternate program location or as complex as creating a satellite nature center.

***Recommendations at a Glance:***

1. Orientation/Park Tour for inn employees
2. Planning sessions with inn administration
3. Brochure about the inn history.
4. Using the Recreation Center as a satellite nature center

### **III. Nature Center**

In the fall of 2009, new exhibits were installed at the Nature Center. The large, open exhibit hall is now broken into several galleries that visitors are guided through. Galleries include: geology, ice age, flora and fauna, cultural history, civilian conservation corps and the naturalist cabin.

***Recommendations:***

- A. Roving Interpretation.** In addition to many interactive exhibits, spaces were designed for activities, spontaneous programs and roving interpretation. Built-in work tables and a carpeted program area provide several options. Topical and seasonal activities can be set out on tables to be engaged in as people pass through.
- B. Marketing the Nature Center.** The much-needed new exhibits do a great job of telling the park's story. It is important that the new facility be promoted. Many people may have stopped visiting the nature center as many of the exhibits had not been changed for decades. Suggestions for marketing:
  1. *Schools.* Promote ties to the Indiana state education requirements. (see <http://dc.doe.in.gov/Standards/AcademicStandards/StandardSearch.aspx> for standards) Educators aren't looking for a new curriculum, but a way to meet the existing state mandates for their grade level. A professionally designed flyer could be headed: *How can McCormick's Creek State Park help you meet your goals?* or *McCormick's Creek: Meeting your education needs for 100 years* or *Classroom*

*in the Woods*. It would follow with a sampling of grade level objectives and photos of exhibits that cover the information needed. The flyer would be available in hard copy and electronically for distribution.

2. *Pre-schools*. The Nature Center has many interactive exhibits and activity areas that work well for pre-school aged kids. Promoting the Nature Center at local daycare centers through flyers and outreach programming will not only get those facilities involved, but will also get the students' families out. Daycares will need parent chaperones. These adults will return later with their extended families. Additionally, the children will tell their parents about their day at the park, encouraging the parents to make a return trip. There is also the potential for informal groups of pre-school children to return with their friends and parents.
3. *Program Room*. The Program Room has recently had renovations to the carpet and windows. Outside organizations from the region can be encouraged to use the room for their meetings. Scout councils, community groups or environmental organizations are examples of groups who could be approached. This recommendation will bring people into the building who might otherwise never visit. They will walk through the exhibit hall, and promote the new exhibits to others. Since many community groups meet in the evenings, staff would need to be extended to cover this time.

**C. Roofed Outdoor Program Area.** There is an outdoor area on the grounds of the Nature Center for programs. The small amphitheater has benches and an area at the front for the interpreter. A roof over the amphitheater would allow it to be used when the sun is intense, or when it is raining.

#### ***Recommendations at a Glance:***

1. Utilize new exhibit areas for increased roving interpretation
2. Implement marketing strategies for schools, pre-schools and outside organizations
3. Roofed outdoor program area

## **IV. Media**

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **A. Brochures.**

1. *Geology Brochure update*. The park geology brochure, created by the Indiana Geological Survey needs to be updated. Since its creation decades ago, new information about the canyon has emerged. Additionally, the brochure needs to



address the sensitivity and ecology issues of the karst region.

2. *Civilian Conservation Corps Guide to McCormick's Creek*. The park is rich in CCC structures and history. A guide would include a park map identifying CCC projects, facts about the projects, information about the camp and general information about the CCC. This could be developed into a self-guided brochure and/or a downloadable audio recording.
3. *Self-Guided Trail (see Trails)*

## B. Signs

1. *Statehouse Quarry*. The Statehouse Quarry weaves together the stories of geology, the early limestone industry and Indiana's historic buildings. An interpretive panel would cover these stories.
2. *Mills*. Two mill sites have been identified along the creek. Placing a sign at these sites is problematic due to the rocky creek bed that is subject to flooding. An alternative location would be at or near the falls overlook. The sign would address the history of the mills, the importance of mills in the frontier economy and how the mills worked.
3. *WPA*. Projects attributed to the WPA such as the amphitheater should be marked with a recognition sign. The sign would include a date and brief description of the WPA.

### *Recommendations at a Glance:*

1. Update geology brochure
2. CCC Guide to McCormick's Creek (brochure and/or audio program)
3. Statehouse Quarry sign
4. Mill sign
5. WPA sign

## V. Staff

### *Recommendations:*

- A. **Increase hours allocated to seasonal staff.** At present, programming and nature center hours are limited by the amount of hours currently allocated for interpretive staff. Maintaining a presence at the Nature Center while still offering programs away from

the building is difficult. Special events requiring several staff are also problematic.

In order to better staff the nature center, meet the demand for special events and implement plan recommendations, the amount of hours allocated for staff needs to be expanded.

- B. **Resource manager position.** Over the years, the full-time interpreter position in the IDNR has been assigned the task of property resource manager. Assessing and organizing deer reductions, controlling invasive plants and protecting sensitive sites are resource management tasks. This responsibility requires skills, knowledge and education in the sciences as well as the time to devote to it.

In order to effectively manage the park's resources, a resource manager position should be instituted. This position would require a background in natural sciences, setting up studies to determine actions, and implementing those actions.

***Recommendations at a Glance:***

1. Increase present staff hours allocation
2. Create resource manager position

## **VI. Trails**

***Recommendations:***

- A. **Self-guided Trail.** A short loop trail circles behind the Nature Center through young woods that separate the Nature Center from the pool and playground areas. The trail has been developed into a self-guided Habitat Trail with a brochure and 12 numbered stops.

The trail's proximity to the Nature Center, its short length and easy topography makes it ideal for very young children. The interpretive goal of the trail would be to get this age group outdoors and observing nature. Fewer stops (6-8) would make the trail interactive, but not overwhelming.

A possible Animal Senses theme would have stops such as:

1. Sight. Look around for a moment. Now close your eyes and keep them closed. For each different color you remember seeing, hold up one finger. Did you see any animals?
2. Sounds. Be quiet for a moment. What sounds did you hear? Were they animal sounds? Manmade sounds?

3. Frozen animals. Animals hide by blending in and by staying very still. While the leader counts to 10, hide and stay still. Now jump up and down. Was it easier to find you when you were jumping or when you were still?
4. Etc.

The brochure with numbered stops would be available to families or pre-school groups. The stops would be routed on wooden posts. Finding the next post and identifying the number could be incorporated as a part of the brochure.

- B. Falls to Old Bridge connecting trail.** As a means of connecting the north and south sides of the park, a short trail could be installed leading from the falls overlook to the old bridge. The bridge would provide a crossing point even when the water was high. Once across the creek, an unofficial, but well-established trail links the bridge parking to the pool and nature center.

Creating this spur would allow the interpreter to lead hikes from the Nature Center to the falls and provide a link from the Inn to the Nature Center that avoids roads.

The area between the falls and bridge is steep, so laying out a trail would require some engineering. Additionally, safety warning signs would be needed where pedestrians are crossing the road and bridge.

***Recommendations at a Glance:***

1. Re-work Habitat Trail brochure into a Nature Awareness trail for young children.
2. Create a spur trail from the falls to the bridge to better link the north and south sides of the park.

## **VII. Other Historical Sites**

**A. Home Sites.** Several home sites and a school site are known to exist. Some locations have been identified, others are only located on a plat map.

***Recommendations:***

**1. Archaeological Inventory.** It would be valuable to conduct an archaeological survey to determine specific locations.

**2. Location and Perimeter Marking.** Where home sites and foundations can be determined, there is an opportunity to mark building perimeters with posts or stones. This would provide a visual of home size and location. A small sign could include family name and other existing information such as dates, occupation, etc.

**3. Programs.** Themed hikes would take participants to the identified sites. The num-

ber of sites included would be variable depending on theme and time allotted.

Theme examples:

- a. Welcome to the Neighborhood (similar to the Lincoln Neighborhood walking tour)
- b. Making a Living (farms, mills, quarry, sanitarium)
- c. Walking to School (walking to the schoolhouse location from one of the home sites)

Depending on which sites are selected, this could be a short walk or an all-day hike. If a long hike, it could be advertised to local fitness groups, hiking clubs or the Audubon chapter.

**B. WPA.** (See Media Recommendations)

## **VII. Beech Grove Shelter**

### ***Recommendation***

The park campground does not contain a program area. The Nature Center is over .5 miles from the campground. The amphitheater is roughly 1.5 miles from the campground by road.

The Beech Grove Shelter is a large historic shelter within the campgrounds. Although it is a reservable shelter, it is used on a limited basis for programs and special events. It is recommended to increase its use for programs when not reserved. Late Friday afternoons when people are arriving at the Campgrounds would be an ideal time to offer a craft activity or other informal activity geared to children. This has been done successfully at other park campgrounds.

## Summary of Recommendations

Category	Phase I	Phase II
<b>Peden Site</b>	Archaeological Assessment	Trail from Nature Center
	Spur Trail from Trail 9	Peden/History event
	Short loop at site	Peden self-guided brochure
	Springhouse sign	
	Homestead sign	
	Nancy Peden fitness walk	
<b>Canyon Inn</b>	Orientation/training for inn employees Planning sessions with Inn admn  Brochure about inn history	Recreation Center as programming site
<b>Nature Center</b>	Increase roving at Nature Center Implement marketing strategies	Roofed outdoor program area
<b>Media</b>	Update geology brochure Statehouse Quarry sign Mill sign	CCC Guide to McCormick's Creek WPA plaque at amphitheater
<b>Staff</b>	Increase staff hours allocation	Create resource manager position
<b>Trails</b>	Re-work Habitat Trail into trail for young children	Create spur trail from falls to old bridge
<b>Historical Sites</b>	Archaeological Assessment  Themed historical hike incorporating sites	Mark home perimeters and/or identify with signs
<b>Beech Grove Shelter</b>	Increase use of this site as a Campground program area	

**Phase I in order of priority with time estimate**

Years to Complete	1	2	3	4	5
Project					
1. Increase roving at the Nature Center					
2. Implement marketing strategies at the Nature Center					
3. Increase use of Beech Grove Shelter as program site					
4. Arch. assessment at Peden site and home sites					
5. Increase seasonal staff hours allocation					
6. Planning sessions with inn administration					
7. Re-work self-guided trail at Nature Center					
8. Short loop at Peden site					
9. Spring house sign at Peden site					
10. Homestead sign at Peden site					
11. Statehouse quarry sign					
12. Mill sign					
13. Update geology brochure					
14. Orientation/training for Inn employees					
15. Develop themed historical walks to home sites					

**Phase II in order of priority with time estimate**

Years to Complete	1	2	3	4	5
Project					
1. Create resource manager position					
2. Create spur trail from falls to old bridge					
3. Trail from Nature Center to Peden site					
4. Roofed outdoor program area at Nature Center					
5. Peden self-guided brochure					
6. Recreation Center as programming site					
7. CCC Guide to McCormick’s Creek					
8. Mark perimeters of home sites and ID with signs					
9. WPA plaque at amphitheater					
10. Peden/History event					

