

**Jordan Creek Area High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) Proposal
Owen-Putnam State Forest
30-day Public Comment Period**

The Indiana State Forest system consists of approximately 160,000 acres of primarily forested land. These lands are managed under the principle of multiple use-multiple benefit to provide forest conservation, goods, and services for current and future generations. The management is guided by scientific principles, guiding legislation and comprehensive forest certification standards which are independently audited to help insure long term forest health, resiliency, and sustainability.

As part of forest certification, areas can be designated as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF). Designated HCVF's are forest areas that receive added consideration of management activities to maintain or enhance conservation value attributes. These attributes may be of biological, ecological, or cultural significance.

Nominations for new HCVF may come from within the Department of Natural Resources or from individuals or interested groups. For more information regarding HCVF on State Forests or the HCVF proposal process, visit

<https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-HighConservationValueForests.pdf>

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Please use Jordan Creek Area HCVF Proposal in the "Subject or File Reference (PDF)" line to ensure that your comment receives appropriate consideration. Comments received within 30 days of posting will be considered by the HCVF Review Team for this proposal.

High Conservation Value Forest Proposal: Jordan Creek Area of Owen-Putnam State Forest

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Legal Description: Portions of Jennings township and Morgan township in Owen County Indiana Township 11N, Range 4W, portions of Sections 9 (560 in OPSF +/-) and 16 (252 acres in OPSF +/-).

The Owen-Putnam Friends of the Forest is seeking approval for the designation of a portion of Owen-Putnam State Forest as a High Conservation Value Forest.

The proposed High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) area includes approximately 815 acres in the forest. The terrain contains ridge tops, slopes of moderate to steep slopes and bottom land supporting several streams including the permanent creek called Jordan Creek.

The proposed HCVF lies in Compartment 4 of OPSF with some tracts from Compartment 2 being requested as they provide a tie to the existing Section 9 seeps Nature Preserve within the forest.



Figure 1. Proposed Jordan Creek HCVF (outlined in red)



Figure 2. Aerial view - Proposed Jordan Creek HCVF (outlined in red)

The proposed area distinguishes itself in several ways. First, species that are endangered, threatened, or of concern in Indiana have been noted in various portions of the area. Second, there

are several artifacts related to previous occupants of the area to be found within the wild area. This is important not so much because of a single historical remnant but because we are losing reminders of our history due to urbanization of the land in Indiana. Finally, there are adequate access points to the proposed wild area through the Rattlesnake Campground, an established point for recreation and observation. From the Division of Forestry's (DoF's own documentation we find: "*Because Rattlesnake campground is located inside the tract (12), it is an ideal spot for anyone looking for an accessible outdoor experience.*" People can spend a day, a weekend, or a week exploring this natural area using the existing trails as pathways to observation areas.

This section of the forest was purchased at various times dating back into the late 1940's. The dominant species of trees within the area are beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) maple (*Acer saccharinum*, *Acer saccharum*, *Acer rubrum*), poplar (*Liliodendron tulipferia*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), and white pine (*Pinus strobus*) and red pine (*Pinus resinosa*).

Descriptions of the proposed HCVF area that have been provided in historical Draft Resource Management Guides (DRMGs) now called Resource Management Guides (RMGs) provide some of the details about species of interest in the proposed area. The submitters assert that the Division of Forestry has done a fine job of describing these tracts and their descriptions point to a valuable section of the forest worth conserving.

For example, in the Draft Resource Management Guide for Compartment 4, Tract 7 posted August 6, 2008, we find the following: "*Snags and hollow trees provide nesting, bugging and roosting sites for woodpeckers, songbirds, small mammals, and the Indiana Bat. Rotten logs, crater knolls and the creek along the eastern boundary of the tract provide habitat for herptiles, aquatic vertebrates and mollusks.*"

As well, in the Draft Resource Management Guide for Compartment 4 Tract 12 posted July 1, 2013, we find the following: "*Snags in this tract provide essential habitat characteristics for foraging activity, nest/den sites, decomposers (e.g., fungi and invertebrates), bird perching and bat roosting, and are important contributors to the future pool of downed woody material.*"

The presence of the Indiana Bat and other species of interest and concern is therefore acknowledged by the Indiana Division of Forestry.

DRMGs indicate observed diversity and recreation features of the tracts.

Compartment and Date	Acres	Harvested	Notes
C4T5 14-Feb-2022	74	2007	"The blue loop horse trail runs along the ridge top and down a northeastern facing aspect where it then crosses the intermittent stream exiting the tract. The fire access road from Rattlesnake campground also provides easy direct access to the southern boundary of the tract. These two access points, adjacent private property, and the remote location make this tract an ideal hunting location." Also ", This

			cover type is characterized by the diverse species composition”
C4t6 18-October 18-2013	85	2013-2014	A parcel of land was purchased in 1959 from Charles and Nettie Dale. Another parcel of land was purchased in 1963 from the Maja, Siergiej, and Gorski families.
C4T7 6-August -2008	67	None	Specific mention of Indiana Bat in a previous RMG.
C4T8 14-Feb-2022	74	Salvage sale in 2005	Except for 4 acres, this tract was purchased in 1953 and 1959. A diverse overstory exists, with 18 species of sawtimber size recorded in the inventory. Regeneration is abundant and diverse, consisting of 16 species, but mostly shade tolerant American beech, sugar maple, and bluebeech
C4T9 Prior to 2008			No online RMG is available.
C4T10 13-Jan-2011	66	1997	Tract is in the Shawnee Hills region. Recreation - this multiple use tract is near Rattlesnake Campground and is easily accessed on foot. It is often high use area for hunters, in addition, a section of the Blue Horse Trail/Bridal Loop crosses this tract and is frequented by horseback riders. This tract is also easily accessible to the driving public via the parking lot on Surber Rd.
C4T11 Feb 14, 2017, and Oct 2014	90	2017-2018	Pine planted in the 1950's. Tract was farmed until the 1930's
C4T12 17-Oct- 2013	77		From DRMG “In 1953, 60 acres of land was purchased from John and Pauline Dowdall. In 1959, 160 acres of land was purchased from Charles and Nettie Dale. In 1963, 160 acres of land was purchased from Allen and Anna Mae Milliner” From DRMG “this section is most distinct by its rugged hills with sandstone cliffs and rock shelters”. Tract well represented for habitat trees essential for various habitat needs including habitat species such as cavity nesters and BATS!
C4T13 Prior to 2008	93		No online RMG is available.
C4T14 13-Jan 13-2011 and Dec 2009	83	1990	It is stated that it is near to the Rattlesnake Campground and that hunters come to this tract. Also, the horse trail passes through it. A reference is also made to cultural sites

			and that the northern boundary of the tract is a stream that flows into Jordan Creek.
C2T4 Prior to 2008	90		No online RMG is available.
C4T6			There are three springs in C4, T 6, adding to the hydrology of the area. Because of its proximity to Rattlesnake Campground Roads & Parking, it is an ideal spot for anyone looking for a more accessible outdoor experience.

This Owen-Putnam Friends of the Forest team has spent hundreds of hours in the last few years exploring and learning about the features of this forest. It asserts that, taken all together, the area outlined demonstrates adherence to the landscape level diversity criteria, the watershed criteria, the rarity of species criteria, and the cultural criteria of the HCVF classification system. To date the area has been lightly managed; that makes this application a timely one from the standpoint of conservation. In addition, the proximity of the Rattlesnake Campground gives observers a base from which to operate. This proposed HCVF provides landscape diversity and a deep woods experience covering a little more than a square mile of forest land. It is a special place worth saving for humans, for ecosystems, and for historical preservation.

Our observations will be on a tract-by-tract basis.

In C4T5 we found what we believe is Ostrich Fern in the creek bottoms. This tract in part filters and drains into Jordan Creek, and the watershed for this area would be affected by any substantial silviculture. There are steep ravines through which the creek flows. In the portion of the tract that has not seen substantial silviculture, the trees are mature, and the understory is clean as one would expect from a healthy diverse mature forest. Rock outcroppings and caves can become habitat for deep woods animals. This area is a good area for frogs. Also, in that tract we found remnants of previous inhabitants with a piece of equipment stamped 1903. There is in addition one foundation from the early mid twentieth century in the tract. With respect to previous silviculture, the tract has been substantially cut leaving bare dirt and ruts.

In C4T6 we note that this tract contributes to the landscape diversity of the entire HCVF proposed area. This tract is the only reasonable access to C4T5, and the horse trail goes through it.

In C4T7 we note species diversity with a mixture of hardwoods including mature beech as well as oak and hickory. The understory runs from open to modestly choked with green briar. Not many invasives were noticed. Shining Club Moss is also found here. There are several lithic features including the large rock overhang, and area with rock bluff and a cave yet unexplored. These and other similar should be checked for wildlife habitats including bats. From a cultural perspective, the remains of the Dollerson home site are in this tract. The blue horse trail runs along the SW boundary and gives easy access to tract. Tract is due west of Rattlesnake Campground and easily accessed there.

In C4T8 we note that the tract has a varied makeup, but it is interesting on several levels. The topography runs from creek bottom flats to rock strewn ravines. The trees are of range of species but are represented by several large mature trees. The flats are walnut sycamore maple with the species changing while gaining elevation. Of course white oak, red oak, and hickory are present. The most recent RMG noted there are 18 species present in the overstory and 16 species present

in the understory. Shining club moss has been found and is noted in this tract. This tract has an impressive number of lithic features that correspond well with tract thirteen. Several bluffs, ravines, rock shelters and more with springs in several sites appear throughout the tract. Culturally this tract is rich in content. It has Abner Frasier' grave, remnants (foundation stones) believed to have been a Cooksey operations and stones from a small house. Blue Horse trail runs thru this tract. This tract has not been actively managed since purchase other than one salvage cut due to a windstorm.

In C4T12 we note not only the presence of the campground and the traversal of the horse trail but also the presence of historical sites. The Query home site is in this area. We find more Shining Club Moss in the tract. The tract has many features of a mature forest including species diversity and a clean understory. There are SNAGS which can be used by wildlife. This tract has not been actively managed since its purchase in 1963. Lithic features are also quite visible from the horse trail. In the DRMG for Tract 12, we note the following statement. "This part of Owen-Putnam State Forest falls in the Shawnee Hills Natural Region, Crawford Upland Section. The region represents presettlement conditions better than any other region in Indiana." This is based upon a 1985 article in the *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science*. To be clear, we do not assert that this is an old growth forest. What we do assert is that there is conservation value in leaving this area alone because urbanization and growth are changing the rest of the landscape that is not public land. Indeed, the article was 28 years old when this statement appeared in the DRMG. Precious landscapes were already becoming more precious. We have found shining club moss in 3 patches west of the Query homesite in between the haul road and horse trail.

In C4T13 we note the presence of a maturing forest within a diverse landscape both within and without of the tract. There are numerous lithic features here. We have noted caves for wildlife, and we have noted substantial groups of Shining Club moss at several locations within the tract. We also noted a varied mix of large ferns that may include intermediate ferns, ostrich fern, and cinnamon fern. The Query barn is in this tract. Of all the tracts of the Owen-Putnam State Forest, this tract was singled out by former state forester Burnell Fischer as one that should be preserved. Its adjacency to the C4T12 makes it accessible for those who wish study and enjoy this gem of this forest. It to our knowledge has not been harvested since the forest was established in the late 1940's.

To maintain a continuous deep woods experience with continuity to the nearby Section Nine Seep Springs Nature Preserve, C4 T10, C4 T11, C4T14 and C2T4 are included in the proposal. As well, it has been noted that the landscape in C2T4 has an elevated level of diversity with low levels of disturbance. One of the measures sometimes used is that of the mean C for floristic quality. The submitting team had neither the funding nor the expertise to perform such an assessment. On a social hike through this tract in 2019, Dr. Paul Rothrock, an expert in the field, estimated that the area would have a mean C of 4.2 or 4.3 based upon the species encountered and his experience in similar settings. As well, while studying bats has become understandably much more difficult in this time of Covid, we believe that study would be useful.

Given the landscape level diversity of the entire area in the core of the Owen-Putnam State Forest, given the presence of certain remnants of early European settlers in Indiana, and given the presence of ecologically balanced and sensitive systems in this area, we respectfully request that the outlined area be designated a High Conservation Value Forest.