

President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Project Commission

**Fort Harrison State Park
Turkey Run Inn - Strauss Room
8102 Park Road
Marshall, IN 47859
Minutes of June 9, 2026**

1) Call to Order

Emily Kress, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order of the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust (PBHCT) Project Commission at approximately 12:00 p.m., EST, on June 9, 2026, at the Turkey Run Inn, Marshall, Indiana.

2) Review and Approval of the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Project Commission Meeting Minutes for March 10, 2026

Sam Bond moved to approve the minutes. Kris Krouse seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, the motion carried.

3) Environmental License Plate Sales

Mark Becker, PBHCT Executive Director, presented a chart with Environmental license plate sales data since 2014. While he reported at the March meeting that calendar year 2025 saw the most plates sold since calendar year 2010, in calendar year 2026 license plate sales are down 371 plates compared with this time last year. Year-over-year fiscal year plate sales are down about 600 plates. This is likely attributable to the BMV's new "blackout" plate.

4) Financial Report

Becker presented the financial report including fund balances for each PBHCT account.

5) Land Acquisition Report

Becker presented a table showing Division of Land Acquisition productivity in CY2026 to date. Files completed in the calendar year to date:

Fee Simple	4	206 acres
Conservation Easements	4	330 acres
Easements	10	(utility, ingress/egress, etc.)
Other	1	(environmental restrictive covenants, etc.)
Total	19	

One project was a PBHCT project.

Becker also gave an update on the Next Level Conservation Trust (\$25M ARPA funds appropriated for Conservation Land Acquisition by the General Assembly).

Since 2023, 29 NLCT projects have been completed or are in process, totaling 3,621 acres of land. The final project is in payment and is anticipated to close later in June. The NLCT required a 25% match, which was exceeded at a match of 32%.

Becker introduced Erika Hinshaw to provide an update on recent PBHCT / NLCT closings. During the period February 1 – April 30 (since last meeting), one PBHCT project and one NLCT project closed:

PBHCT #1601: Nature Preserves – Big Walnut Nature Preserve

On March 31, DNR completed the acquisition of a Conservation Easement covering 23.39 acres in Putnam County for \$160,000. The property features high quality forested slopes and approximately 220 feet of frontage along Big Walnut Creek located adjacent to the Rolling Stone Covered Bridge.

NLCT #4013-B: Forestry – Yellowwood State Forest

On March 4, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of a 122.4-acre addition to Yellowwood State Forest in Brown County. The property was acquired from the Girl Scouts of Central Indiana for \$860,000. The property shares a border with existing State Forest on all four sides and provides connectivity to tracts acquired between 1954 and 1987. It features areas of young stands of tulip poplar, early successional species, and moderate to steep terrain.

6) PBHCT Marketing Strategy

PBHCT statute allows for the use of the Stewardship Account for promotional purposes – up to 10% pursuant to IC 14-12-2-26(a)(6)(D). As discussed at the March meeting, DNR will use the Stewardship Account marketing funds to purchase t-shirts for DNR Employees and Volunteers at the State Fair. Becker stated that this provides good visibility for the license plate with our DNR's core audience. This purchase is just a small portion of the funds available for marketing.

Sam DeWeese of the Division of Communications presented a marketing strategy he helped the Division of Land Acquisition develop for the environmental license plate. The marketing campaign will include billboards, banners at events, direct mail/email, and a targeted digital campaign.

7) Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on September 8, 2026, 11:00 a.m. EST, at McCormick's Creek State Park.

8) Meeting adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:50 p.m.

Commission Members in Attendance:

**Emily Kress
Sam Bond
Missi Bush-Sawtelle
Kade Carter
Gene Hopkins
Kris Krouse
Ron Hellmich, Nature Preserves
Zack Smith, Forestry proxy
Mike Linderman, State Museum proxy
Anthony Sipes, State Parks proxy
Laura Minzes, Fish & Wildlife proxy
Mary McConnell (call in)
Mike Karickhoff (call in)**

Other Attendees:

**Mark Becker
Dale Brier
Sam DeWeese
Jill Flachskam
Erika Hinshaw
Shannon Stanis
John Connell (call in)
Jennifer Sullivan (call in)**