What a great centennial year state parks had. Thanks to all the volunteers and Friends Groups for making it memorable year!

Numbers compiled by Ginger Murphy, Indiana State Parks Director for Stewardship
First Day Hikes are a big hit!
Many volunteers and Friends groups helped to organize these hikes on January 1. The 2017 total number of First Day Hike participants were 2,316 with a total number of miles offered to hike at 52.05. That means a total number of miles hiked (miles offered x total participants) was 14,261 miles. This event grows every year. Thanks to all the volunteers for helping make it a success. Can’t wait for next year!

Some highlights:
**Fort Harrison: 12:00 pm. Harrison Trace Hike** 2 miles x 93 hikers = 186 miles
Hikers at Fort Harrison’s First Day Hike. The Friends Group helps out. Photos below.

**Clifty Falls: 2:00 pm. Waterfall Walk** 1 mile x 61 hikers = 61 miles
Brad Kessans greets hikers during hike, and hikers enjoy hot drinks at Clifty Inn afterward. Photos below.

**Prophetstown: 1:00 pm. New Bike Trail to Boardwalk**
2 miles x 120 = 240 miles
Hikers gather at the Prophetstown overlook, then hike to the new bicycle trail boardwalk. Photo right.

**Pokagon: 10:30 am. Birding First Day Hike!** 1.5 miles x 79 hikers = 118 miles
Marie Laudeman hikes with guests. Photo right.
Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service brings out volunteers to Pokagon
Submitted by Marie Laudeman, Naturalist, Pokagon SP

Pokagon was lucky to have Cheryl Skiba Jones and Donna Warble help at the Nature Center on MLK Day. Cheryl is a returning MLK day volunteer! Donna volunteers at the Nature Center regularly. We are very thankful for both of them in their efforts to come together on MLK Day to serve their Pokagon community! Below are some jobs they performed for us this morning.

Jobs:
- Greeting and answering questions of visitors in our busy Nature Center this morning!
- Feeding Nature Center turtles
- Cleaning and tidying the Nature Center
- Assisting the Naturalist with their Scavenger Hunt program

Thanks so much!

Left: Cheryl Skiba Jones with her big smile
Right: Donna Warble showing a guest the box turtle.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service is the first major national volunteer day.
Do you have your calendars marked for the other days?
- National Volunteer Week: April 23-29, 2017
- National Public Lands Day: September 30, 2017
- Giving Tuesday: November 28, 2017

Volunteers are welcome any day of the year! For example, Curt Graham braved the cold and negative temperatures last December at Tippecanoe River State Park to pull Winter Creeper around the office. Assistant Manager Jake Shapley was very impressed and took the photo right.
**DNR news release:**
Campground hosts are needed at Indiana State Parks, Forest and State Recreation properties

Several of Indiana's state parks, forest and state recreation properties are looking for volunteers to serve as campground hosts in exchange for free camping during their service.

Hosts work a minimum of 20 hours per week. The volunteer period length varies at properties based on the number of applicants and on the amount and type of work required.

Properties are looking for dedicated campers who enjoy working outdoors, with people and DNR staff.

A complete list of site availability and detailed information about hosting duties are at [stateparks.IN.gov/2404.htm](http://stateparks.IN.gov/2404.htm) or contact the property where you would like to serve as a host.

Completion of a volunteer application is required to apply. Download a volunteer application form at [stateparks.IN.gov/2443.htm](http://stateparks.IN.gov/2443.htm)

(Please share with anyone interested!)

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**We love our Campground Hosts!**

In 2016, state parks had nearly 40,000 hours put in by campground hosts! Property staff enjoy working with hosts who love the parks. The efforts of the hosts make each park a better place.

Left photo is of Larry and Vickie Bullard refinishing the Nature Center floor at Versailles. They have hosted at Versailles for many years.

Below left: Darin and Dana Koch not only performed their campground host duties at Pokagon, but also donated time as roving naturalists by setting up their solar scope on clear sunny days for visitors to the Pokagon Nature Center to enjoy seeing the sun.

Below right: Kay Kilgore, campground host at Harmonie, paints one of the water spigots in the campground during the park's annual cleanup in the Spring.
State Park Experience
By Rick and Kandy Dold, Advanced Indiana Master Naturalists and DNR volunteers

Kandy and I did not come up with any single experience that was particularly profound and noteworthy enough to be newsletter material. We just enjoy all the state parks and properties. We Hoosiers are not only privileged to be the beneficiary of Col. Lieber's vision to save Indiana's wild lands 100 years ago, we have the incredible opportunity to experience these places through a dedicated staff of interpreters that create a much more comprehensive appreciation for these special spaces. It is through the experiences of visiting the Indiana State Parks and Properties that Kandy and I have had not just the opportunity to learn about Indiana, but to contribute in a small way towards perpetuating Col. Lieber's vision to save for future generations Indiana's environmental and ecological heritage, through the volunteer opportunities that occur during those visits. We are avid Explore program participants and in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the Indiana State Parks completed our quest to earn all of the Explore program pins. Just another example of interpreters enriching our state property experiences. Thank You! Picture of our "camper banner" we like to display at the campground is attached. It usually stimulates some conversation about the Explore program and generally results in someone saying they really need to check out more of the Indiana state properties.

"Our parks and preserves are not mere picnicking places. They are rich storehouses of memories and reveries. They are guides and counsels to the weary and faltering in spirit. They are bearers of wonderful tales to him who will listen; a solace to the aged and an inspiration to the young."

- Col. Richard Lieber, 1869-1944

Born in Germany, came to Indianapolis in 1891. Became a conservationist known around the nation. Known in Indiana as the founder of the Indiana State Park system. Pictured right.
Friends of Ouabache State Park have been very busy raising money for the restoration of the fire tower. Several fundraisers have been occurring since July. Over $60,000 has been raised toward the $75,000 goal. Alec Snelson, Assistant Property Manager at Ouabache wanted to share this after one of the recent fundraisers at a local restaurant where the guests paid to eat at the buffet with proceeds going to the fire tower. Many of the friends members were helping by waiting on and cleaning tables.

“Dear Friends,

This was a wonderful event. My wife and I were amazed at the amount of folks that were there! We came a little after 5, and it was full! All the workers did such an incredible job.

Thank you all, from the park staff. Each time we receive an update from you all, we are very impressed! The effort being put in from all the committees and members is very commendable. We are lucky to have this much involvement with the group!

Thank you again and keep up the remarkable job everyone is doing!”

If you would like more information about the Ouabache fire tower fundraising contact Friends of Ouabache at friendsofouabache@gmail.com.

Right photo of the Fire tower lit up during the Wonderland of Lights event. The lights were synchronized to music!