

Bicentennial Legacy Conservation Area Announcement
October 9, 2013

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you Cameron Clark for your wonderful leadership at the Department of Natural Resources.

It is such a delight for the First Lady and me to be here at the Cope Environmental Center on such a beautiful day in Wayne County, Indiana. It is glorious!

Allison (Zajdel) thank you for the wonderful hospitality and enthusiastic opening comments. To Helen Cope, members of the Board, and volunteers who have made the Cope Environmental Center such a special place for students and for families to come and to enjoy. This is our first visit here, and we'll be back. This is a real jewel.

I am grateful to be here with the former Lt. Governor (Becky Skillman) who took on the task of co-chairing Indiana's Bicentennial Commission, and, as you just heard, is joined by some of the most distinguished leaders in the state of Indiana who are also with us today. I am grateful also for the strong support that our Commission's efforts received from members of the General Assembly, not only is Sen. Merritt here in his capacity on the Commission, but he's been one of the great champions of celebrating Indiana's 200th anniversary. Rep. Dick Hamm is also with us today and is a strong supporter of this effort and all of our efforts.

I also am grateful for a strong relationship and the fact that Centerville allowed the Mayor of Richmond to come over today. Sally (Hutton) thank you for coming out, and thanks for your commitment to the environment.

I can tell you we're excited about this announcement. We're excited about what it means for Indiana today for Indiana's bicentennial, but I'm excited about what it means for generations of Hoosiers to come. Today, Indiana will make a decisive step toward improving and promoting new collaborations to make Indiana a leading state in conservation in the United States of America.

President Teddy Roosevelt said, "There is a delight in the hearty life of the open."

If you follow me on Twitter, you might have even seen that Saturday in the rain, I was on a horse enjoying a particularly hearty time in the Owen-Putnam State Forest. I can tell you as a family, when it came to vacation time this summer, we found ourselves more often than not in Brown County or Clifty Falls or Potato Creek or Whitewater Memorial or Shakamak. For the Pence family, for our three kids, being in the outdoors all across the Hoosier state, all across this country, is something that has defined us as a family. We feel a great joy in celebrating that, and a great sense of obligation with the responsibilities that we've been given to continue to promote and to preserve our vast natural resources as we approach our bicentennial.

In 1916, our State Park System was created to celebrate Indiana's centennial and showcase the Hoosier state's natural beauty. Today, nearly 100 years later, in preparation for Indiana's bicentennial, we gather to announce a new state designation that will focus on large landscape, non-traditional land conservation—I'm pleased to announce the Bicentennial Legacy Conservation Area, beginning right here at the Cope Environmental Center.

This is a public-private partnership with multi-disciplined resources management, requiring partnerships among some of Indiana's finest sustainability and conservation experts, including Cope Environmental Center and the Whitewater Valley Land Trust.

I understand discussions about these Conservation Areas have generated support and excitement all over the state of Indiana. I am confident this can be attributed to the volunteer support, non-governmental organizations and to the great work and the stewardship of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

We're deeply committed to this project. We're focused on:

- Enhancing the quality of life in Indiana by expanding opportunities for outdoor recreation;
- Increasing Indiana's appeal for people to move here, to live here and to enjoy our natural resources;
- Creating a significant conservation destination will also benefit tourism to the state;
- Enhancing air and water quality in the region; and
- Protecting habitat and providing wildlife corridors in fragmented areas of landscape.

The Bicentennial Legacy Conservation Area will begin at Cope Environmental Center to the north in Centerville and end at the southernmost point of Brookville Reservoir, which includes Whitewater Memorial State Park, where I found myself on a motorcycle this last Friday.

Keeping with the public-private partnership, this stretch of land includes high-quality nature preserves with threatened and endangered species owned and managed by Cope and Whitewater Valley, as well as Whitewater Memorial State Park and Brookville Reservoir, which are owned by the State, Army Corps and managed by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

I want to encourage private land owners across the state, beginning today, to renew their reflection and commitment; to consider enrolling in conservation friendly farm programs through which we can share and implement best practices, raise awareness and provide a focus to preserve Indiana's natural beauty and resources. As part of these efforts, the state will continue to cooperate with interested private landowners to protect lands through conservation easements and, when it makes sense, will help Cope and Whitewater Valley Land Trust purchase new land, which they will in turn manage.

As Indiana's early parks system influenced the operation of state parks in fellow states, we believe these Conservation Areas in the state of Indiana will have the potential to serve as a national model for future land and water landscape protection across the United States of America, and that's our aim.

Our administration remains committed to improving the Hoosier quality of life by increasing opportunities for the people of Indiana to enjoy our abundance of natural resources. With the added benefit and help of the Conservation Areas, these goals are even more within reach and closer to home for more Hoosiers to enjoy.

This is only the beginning. I want to encourage local governments all across the state of Indiana and our citizens, generous benefactors across our state, to look for similar opportunities to enhance the quality of life in your community. We are ready to get our hands dirty. We're ready to help every community continue to make Indiana a national leader in conservation, in quality of life and in job growth.

Make no mistake about it, preserving our natural resources is economic development for this generation and the next. It was President Teddy Roosevelt who said, "Conservation is development as much as its protection."

Today's announcement of this Conservation Area and the initiative we'll be working to promote across the state of Indiana, is borne of our deep love for the land and the air and the water and celebrating our natural resources in Indiana. It's also borne of our belief that as we protect and promote our land and its enjoyment, we will promote prosperity in Indiana for generations to come.

I thank leadership within Indiana's Department of Natural Resources, Cope Environmental Center, your Board and your volunteers and the Whitewater Valley Land Trust for their work in launching this project. As we continue to approach the advent of our third century, I can think of no better way to celebrate that than by launching the Bicentennial Legacy Conservation Area right here in Wayne County, Indiana, the heart of the heartland.

It's right for our state. It's right for our people. It's right for our future and our prosperity. It's also right because, "to whom much is given, much will be required."

We in Indiana for now nearly 200 years, enjoyed responsibility of stewardship for some of the most beautiful land in this wonderful nation. It's our job to take care of it, and it's our job to make sure future generations can enjoy it.

Let me just pay a debt of gratitude to all of those who brought us to this day on behalf of those who will come after us. Thank you for loving the land. Thank you for loving our state. Here's to Indiana becoming a national leader in conservation.