

Date: September 1, 2020

To: Zachary Q. Jackson, Director  
Indiana State Budget Agency

From: Danial W. Bortner, Director  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Subject: Indiana Department of Natural Resources Agency Overview

It is my pleasure to submit our FY2022 and FY2023 budget request for consideration by the Indiana General Assembly and the State Budget Committee.

**Mission**

The mission of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is to protect, enhance, preserve, and wisely use natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the benefit of Indiana's citizens through professional leadership, management, and education.

**DNR Pillars**

Customer Service  
Fiscal Responsibility  
Internal Communication  
Succession Planning and Diversity  
Personal Growth  
Slim Down Organization  
Promote DNR Brand

**Agency Functions**

Land Management functions include State Parks, Nature Preserves, Fish and Wildlife, Outdoor Recreation, Forestry, Land Acquisition and Engineering.

Regulatory Management consists of the Water, Entomology and Plant Pathology, Historic Preservation and Archeology, Reclamation and Oil and Gas.

Administrative functions include Law Enforcement, Legislative Affairs, Legal Counsel, Communications, Engineering, Budget and Grants, Payroll, Management Information Systems, Internal Audit, Purchasing, Accounting, Fleet, Facilities, Asset Management, Safety and ADA Compliance and Human Resources.

IDNR has many programs and subprograms, most of which have a recreation, resource protection and/or public safety component. We also place a great deal of emphasis on our permitting, inspection, and licensing programs. Below is a list of the non-administrative IDNR divisions and a brief summary of responsibilities performed under each division.

#### Entomology and Plant Pathology

Staff inspect and license nursery stock; support and advise beekeepers and honey industry; inspect and certify international shipments of grain and plant stock; and scout for exotic and invasive species.

#### Fish & Wildlife

Manage the state's fish and wildlife through professional research, regulation of hunting, fishing, trapping, and restoration of rare species. The fish and wildlife division also stocks fish in public waters, offers hunting, fishing and wildlife watching on division properties, provides access to public lakes and rivers, and offers advice and incentives to landowners for development of wildlife habitat. Horseback riding, hiking, camping and even photography are some additional adventures to be found at Fish and Wildlife properties scattered throughout the State. Staff relies heavily on citizen input to design and apply professional wildlife practices to both public and private lands to improve habitat, promote wildlife management, and increase recreational opportunities.

#### Forestry

Supports multiple uses: recreation, timber production, watershed protection, hunting, and healthy fish and wildlife populations. District Foresters can assist landowners with inspections and management plans tailored to satisfy individual forest stewardship objectives. State nurseries provide stock for landscaping, windbreaks, fire control, and other uses.

#### Historic Preservation and Archaeology

Promotes the conservation of Indiana's cultural resources through public education efforts including sponsorship of Archaeology Month, Historic Preservation Month, the Underground Railroad Initiative and Historic Theater Initiative. Administers programs for protecting and preserving Indiana's prehistoric and historic archaeological sites and the valuable information that they contain. Serves as the central repository of archaeological records and reports for the state, and also houses the state's official computerized database of archaeological site information.

#### Nature Preserves

Identifies, protects, and manages assortment of natural areas in order to maintain viable examples of all of Indiana's natural communities. The same attention is applied to endangered, threatened, or rare species. The Indiana Natural Heritage Data Center is used to locate and keep track of Indiana's rarest plants, animals, and natural communities.

#### Oil & Gas

Regulates petroleum exploration, production and site closing activities, underground injection control, and geophysical surveying. Offers a variety of services to industry, public and other government entities including permit review, site inspections, water and soil sampling, well and pit location surveys, and remediation of damage from abandoned well sites.

### Outdoor Recreation

A source of grant funding and assistance with master plans for park boards. Staff prepare and publish the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The Streams and Trails section coordinates many of Indiana's trail projects including snowmobile and off-road vehicle trails, the Knobstone Trail, and Water Trails. The division also has GIS specialists, who maintain the Indiana Trails Inventory and assist with research and planning. A ready source of technical assistance for the development and support of outdoor activities, including community park planning; hiking and snowmobile trail development and maintenance; off road vehicle recreation; Rails-Trails assistance; and, advice for biking, canoeing, recreation grants and other forms of recreational planning.

### State Parks

There is no end of ways for visitors to enjoy and experience the wondrous variety of Indiana's natural features face-to-face...ride or hike through a forest, romp on the Dunes of Lake Michigan, sail, boat or ski on a reservoir, re-live Indiana settlement life at Spring Mill, study nature with a Naturalist, enjoy a primitive camp, get a room at one of the Inns, meet the family for a picnic, or enjoy wildlife in the natural setting.

### Reclamation

Administers State and Federal programs for the surface mining of coal, clay, shale, or oil shale, and the restoration of lands disturbed for the extraction of these minerals. Permits and monitors active coal mines; designs and oversees construction projects restoring lands disturbed, but improperly reclaimed; responds to citizen inquiries; partners with private landowners, as well as larger citizen groups for other coal related mining and land restoration issues.

### Water

The Division of Water is a regulatory and public information agency, having diverse responsibilities associated with the evaluation of Indiana's water resources, and development near Indiana's waterways and lakes. Regulatory responsibilities include floodway construction, floodplain hazard analysis, lakebed and shoreline alteration, dam safety, conservancy districts, water use, and water well construction. The Division provides useful public information related to water availability throughout Indiana, water use, and participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. Supplies a vast array of water resource information for individual citizens, industry, environmental groups, and government agencies; primarily responsible for programs including floodway construction, dam safety, flood hazard planning, flood plain regulations, conservancy districts, and water well construction.

## **Accomplishments**

IDNR has had many noteworthy accomplishments in the current biennium. The coronavirus pandemic certainly altered operations for several weeks, but IDNR continued on path throughout the unprecedented times. The agency continues to utilize a mixture of state, federal, and private contributions to undertake a variety of projects. Some of those accomplishments are highlighted below.

### Next Level Trails Program

- Governor Eric J. Holcomb launched the Next Level Trails grant program, which dedicated \$90 million to connect communities through more hiking, biking, and riding trails. Next Level Trails is part of Gov. Holcomb's Next Level Connections, a \$1 billion statewide infrastructure program announced in September 2018.

Next Level Trails is the largest infusion of trail funding in state history. The grant program is divided into two components: a \$70 million fund for regional projects and a \$20 million fund for local projects. Each fund will require a minimum 20 percent project match, which can include monetary contributions, land value, and in-kind donations of materials and labor. Projects funded through this program must be open to the public.

### Turkey Run SP listed on National Register of Historic Places

- Turkey Run State Park recently joined a number of state park properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. To be considered for the National Register, the property must be associated with events, activities, or developments, as well as with the lives of people, that were important in the past. For Turkey Run, that was its association with Parke County recreation and its intact state park architecture. Generally, listings on the register are at least 50 years old and look much the way they did in the past.

### Budget Committee approves DNR maintenance funding

- In September 2019, the State Budget Committee approved the initial round of projects, including general rehabilitation and masonry for \$7.8 million, dock work for \$1.5 million, and campground updates for nearly \$1 million. Playgrounds, camp offices, restrooms, and walkways will become more easily accessible to visitors thanks to \$2.8 million dedicated to address 26 ADA projects at 20 sites. Funding for the maintenance project was allocated in the current state budget

### Reclamation project receives recognition

- An Indiana DNR Division of Reclamation project in southwest Indiana has received the highest regional award the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) issues annually.

The award is for the Snow Hill project in Vigo County. The project addressed public safety concerns and environmental damage caused by two large coarse-coal refuse piles on each side of North Coal Creek. Acid mine drainage (AMD) and eroding coal refuse

from the two refuse piles clogged the channel of the creek and substantially degraded its water quality. In addition, the steep, eroding coal refuse on either side of the creek was unstable and posed a danger to visitors.

Impermeable liners and subsurface drainage structures were emplaced on the tops of the two refuse piles and covered by 3 feet of fill in order to reduce infiltration of rainwater through the piles and limit the migration of AMD from the piles to the creek. A three-stage aerobic wetland and settling-pond complex was built downstream of the piles to encourage oxidation of dissolved iron and remove suspended iron oxides from the water column. The coal-refuse embankments were regraded and stabilized to eliminate the public safety hazard.

DNR Reclamation's Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program oversaw the project design, which was completed by ATC Group Services, LLC, of Indianapolis. Project-construction activities were done by general contractor Kerns Excavating, LLC, of Bruceville.

#### Indiana K-9 program graduates seven out-of-state teams

- Indiana DNR recognized the graduation of seven K-9 teams representing the states of Kansas, Oregon, Utah, and Virginia. The K-9 teams trained and honed their skills in Orange County within southern Indiana to qualify for graduation. The Indiana K-9 program started in 1997, with a pilot program of two teams. The effectiveness of the program was quickly realized. The program grew to a team of 12 K-9 units located throughout Indiana. There is at least one K-9 unit in all 10 Indiana DNR Law Enforcement districts.

The Indiana K-9 program is not only well respected in the Hoosier state, but also recognized as one of the top programs in the nation. Indiana has helped start and train teams from seven sister natural resource agencies (Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Oregon, Utah, and Virginia).

Indiana K-9 teams are trained in man-tracking, wildlife detection and article searches. All canines are trained to locate white-tailed deer, wild turkey, waterfowl, and ginseng. They may also be trained to locate other species, depending on the geographic area of Indiana the handler is stationed. Indiana teams excel in man-tracking and locating firearms.

#### Tippecanoe River State Park dedicates Otter Bend Picnic Area

- Tippecanoe River State Park celebrated the opening of Otter Bend Picnic Area with a ceremony on July 30, 2020.

Picnic area development was preceded by a bank stabilization project funded through DNR's Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) program, Indiana State Parks, and a variety of outside partners including the Pulaski County Soil & Water Conservation District, Arrow Head RC&D, First National Bank of Monterey, NIPSCO, Carroll White's

Operation Round Up, Fulton County REMC's Operation Round Up, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kevin Podell and The Nature Conservancy.

### Governor Holcomb announces two new state forests

- Governor Eric J. Holcomb announced the establishment of two new Indiana state forests at a ceremony in Morgan County.

Ravinia State Forest, near Paragon, encompasses 1,500 acres of wooded rolling hills, valleys, and restored cropland. The area now known as Mountain Tea State Forest consists of more than 1,150 acres east of Nashville. The state's public lands now include 15 officially designated state forests.

Recreation opportunities at the new state forests include wildlife viewing, hiking, and the gathering of wild berries, nuts, and mushrooms. Hunting is also permitted in state forests. The new state forests also serve as two locations for [the Governor's Million Trees program](#), which is an initiative to plant one million trees by 2025.

More than 700 acres of Mountain Tea State Forest, formerly managed by The Nature Conservancy, had been acquired by the State of Indiana in 2013 with the assistance of the U.S. Forest Service through the [Forest Legacy Program](#). Additional acreage had been acquired in 2009 through purchases from private landowners.

### **Objectives for the next Biennium**

During the current biennium, IDNR has reviewed programs and related business practices to reduce operational costs yet still providing services required by law and those services our customers expect. We continue to hold public meetings, conduct surveys, and listen to public opinion. It is important our customers understand the purpose and benefits of IDNR. We will continue to seek out new partners, sponsorships, donations, volunteerism, and/or other forms of support from individuals, foundations, corporations, non-profit organizations, and other entities to enhance our existing programs and to provide the best possible quality in our future programming. We will also continue to review our organizational structure in order to obtain increased efficiencies and streamline processes.

### **Key Performance Indicators**

IDNR has three key agency performance indicators which are reported by the respective divisions, and then rolled up into a target number for the agency.

Recreational Revenue Growth

Measures the revenue generated from various recreational activities offered by DNR like hunting and fishing licenses, park passes and boat and bicycle rentals.

Licenses Sold

Measures the number of hunting and fishing licenses DNR sold.

Permitting Efficiency

Measures the percent of total average deadline days DNR used to issue a permit (by Division).

Thank you for your continued support of the IDNR. I look forward to working with the Indiana General Assembly and the staff of the State Budget Agency as you consider IDNR's budget request for the FY 2022 – 2023 biennium.

Respectfully,

Daniel W. Bortner, Director  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources