

# Spring Newsletter 2025



## STAR Financial Enables Students to Discover the Outdoors

Approximately 25,200 students have benefited from the Discover the Outdoors field trip grant program since the fund began in 2013. With the support of our partners and donors, that number continues to rapidly climb.

With a generous \$10,000 gift, STAR Financial recently joined the effort to give every Hoosier student an outdoor education.

When we gathered at Chain O'Lakes State Park in April to celebrate this impactful partnership, many of the STAR team remarked how much they loved the park and were eager to explore it this recreation season, a sentiment that is at the heart of Discover the Outdoors.

Offered in partnership with Indiana State Parks, Discover the Outdoors sends Hoosier students on field trips to an Indiana state park or reservoir where they engage with Indiana's natural resources. Through special experiences and lessons, they learn about the park's wildlife, flora, cultural history, and more.

Educators work with property staff to create an experience that allows them to teach classroom lessons outside. Recently, we joined a large group of third graders at Lincoln State Park, where they learned about its history as well as its special connection to Indiana and U.S. history. Meanwhile, students farther north at Prophetstown State Park explored its unique habitat, learning about grasslands, fens, and wildlife.

Each trip helps students discover the natural world around them. For some students, it's the first time they've spent meaningful time at an Indiana DNR property.



"At STAR Bank, we believe that investing in young people and their experiences is one of the most meaningful ways we can support the future of our communities," said Trevor Smith, commercial banker at STAR Bank. "The Discover the Outdoors program connects students to Indiana's incredible natural resources and inspires curiosity, learning, and stewardship. We're proud to support opportunities that expand access to outdoor education and strengthen the connection between students and the world around them."

Applications for the program are accepted each year from March 15 – April 30 for trips taking place during the next school year. All K-12 schools in Indiana are eligible. Thanks to the continued generosity of our donors, the individual grant amount was increased to \$500 in 2024, greatly expanding the resources available to educators.

It's through these powerful gifts that we're helping educate the next generation of conservation leaders. If you'd like to support outdoor education in Indiana, visit our website at [IndianaNRF.org/donate](https://IndianaNRF.org/donate).



## New Logo. Same Mission.

Soon, you may notice we have a slightly different look. While it was time for a sleeker, more modern design for our logo that has been with us since 2017, our drive to celebrate and preserve Indiana's natural legacy remains the same.

Often among the tallest trees in the state, the tulip tree's iconic leaf remains at the heart of our look. This time of year, you may just find the state tree blooming with bright green, yellow, and orange flowers. The flowers, while temporary, signify the move into a new season in our beautiful state.

We enter this new season with a refreshed look and continued energy for increasing Indiana's public lands, providing outdoor education opportunities, and expanding recreation. We hope to see you outside among the tulip trees this spring and summer.

Before



After



**Indiana  
Natural Resources**  
FOUNDATION



## Running for the Trees

Thanks to everyone who joined us in running for the trees in the 2025 Happy Little 5K! Our team visited Fort Harrison State Park on Earth Day and had a blast running the 5K among the blooming trees. We hope you enjoyed time out at your favorite DNR property.

Your continued support for this event and Indiana's outdoors is truly special. More than 2,300 of you joined the effort this year, giving Indiana the second most registrants of the 13 participating states! Your generosity will support many tree plantings and healthy forest initiatives that will impact Indiana State Parks for years to come.



Invest in  
*Indiana's  
Outdoors*

When you donate to the INRF, you're directly supporting Hoosier conservation. Your gifts acquire new public land, give Hoosier students outdoor experiences, restore critical habitat, and so much more. Together, we will celebrate and preserve Indiana's natural legacy for generations to come.

**Donate at:** [indiananrf.org/donate](https://indiananrf.org/donate)

*Donations are tax deductible under section 170 (c)(1) of the IRS code.*







Spring is an exciting time of year, especially in Indiana's outdoors. The early blooming wildflowers are showing off; the trees are sprouting with new life; and more Hoosiers are beginning to take to the trails, lakes, rivers, and campgrounds as the crisp mornings are followed with nearly perfect afternoon weather.

While we love each of these things about spring, one of our favorite parts of the changing season is our annual Indiana Tree Project planting. This year, we joined our partners from Huston Solar for their third planting, which was also their second at Prophetstown State Park, to celebrate Arbor Day.

The planting came along with some extra excitement this year after being originally scheduled for fall of 2024. After some wet and cold weather ended the tree planting season early, Huston's team began looking forward to a rescheduled date at the park they're deeply connected to.

"Prophetstown is practically in our backyard, and it's a place where many of our team members spend time with their families camping, biking, or simply enjoying nature," said Cam Smith, Huston's solar division manager, last fall. "To be able to enhance the park's environment through our volunteer efforts makes this project even more special to us."

Huston's volunteers made efficient work of the Arbor Day planting. After adding approximately 3,000 new oak trees to the park, the group enjoyed lunch and took a guided hike on which they learned more about the importance of the work they completed.



Staff at Prophetstown are strategically restoring oak savanna habitat at the park, an ongoing project that these tree plantings directly support. While in the park, the volunteers could see this restoration work in various stages, including on their planting site from 2023.

Thanks to our dedicated partners like Huston, along with generous gifts from individual donors, the Indiana Tree Project continues to expand the state's forests. Through tree plantings and land acquisitions, the program is creating habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities that will benefit Hoosiers for generations to come.





## Sign-up for our Monthly Newsletter

We're making waves for conservation and outdoor recreation in the Hoosier state, and so can you. Keep up with us by signing up for our e-newsletter. Receive feature stories, news and photos in your inbox each month.

Sign up by visiting **IndianaNRF.org** and click **Subscribe**.



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