
Fall
Newsletter
2026
INRF

A Growing Team

Meet the Newest Additions to the INRF Board



Tom Shevlot

Tom is happiest outdoors — whether hunting, fishing, camping, or hiking. For him, any day spent in nature is a great day. He supports the INRF because he believes deeply in its role in preserving Indiana's environment and public lands for all Hoosiers. Tom is also inspired by the Foundation's philanthropic impact, ensuring future generations benefit from Indiana's natural treasures.



Jason Kissel

Jason enjoys hiking and occasionally hunting and fishing, but his favorite pastime might be cutting and splitting wood — there's something satisfying, he says, about building stack after stack of firewood. He values the INRF as a way to further support the great work of the DNR. While taxes fund essential operations, the INRF gives Hoosiers the chance to supplement that support with private contributions, helping protect Indiana's most significant natural areas.



Lisa Ice-Jones

Lisa loves walking in the woods, celebrating Indiana's seasonal changes, and tending to all things that grow. Trees, birds, bees, lakes, and creeks — she embraces the full spectrum of Indiana's flora and fauna. She supports the INRF because her background aligns with its mission, and she believes in celebrating Indiana's natural legacy. At the crossroads of America, she sees endless opportunities to learn, share, and appreciate the beauty of our state's heritage.



Heather Harwood

Heather enjoys waterskiing, gardening, hiking, and walking her dog, Hazel. She supports the INRF because its mission is both inspiring and tangible — expanding public lands and restoring natural habitats creates a lasting legacy for future generations. She's excited to see the INRF continue building momentum, connecting people with shared passions for conservation, and ensuring that Hoosiers today and tomorrow experience the same wonder she finds in nature.

The Rest of the INRF Board:

Missi Bush-Sawtelle
Board Chair

Richard Cockrum
Vice-Chair

Karen Valiquett
Secretary

Cam Clark
Treasurer

Brad Skillman

Matthew Kiley

Shawn Kelly

Indiana Natural Resources FOUNDATION

Happy Little 5K

Continues Supporting Indiana's Outdoors



Each spring, Hoosiers lace up their shoes or tune up their bikes and set out for a 3.1-mile trek in support of Indiana's outdoors. The Happy Little 5K has quickly become an annual favorite of many Hoosiers and we're grateful for your continued support.

Michigan DNR first launched the virtual event in partnership with Bob Ross, Inc. in 2020. Indiana joined in 2023 and we have had a blast running for the trees with you each year since then!

Your Support Continues Restoring McCormick's Creek State Park

Earlier this year, we shared how Happy Little 5K funds were being used to restore disturbed habitats at McCormick's Creek after the devastating 2023 tornado. Thanks to the generous support of the event, property staff continue working diligently to rebuild the park with native trees and habitats.

The disturbed areas left from the tornado created a prime environment for invasive species like tree of heaven, stilt grass, mullein, black locust, multiflora rose, and amur cork tree to take over. Using some of the Happy Little 5K funds, McCormick's Creek hired technicians who could strategically target the rapidly spreading invasives. So far, more than 287 acres have been treated including another 118.3 acres this year!

We're looking forward to participating in the 2027 Happy Little 5K and hope you'll join us in running for the trees. Whether you're a returning participant or joining in on the fun for the first time, stay tuned to our newsletters and social media for registration information as it becomes available.



By the Numbers

4
Years of Indiana participation

More than
5,500
total participants

More than
$107,000
total funds raised

2
healthy forest projects completed or in progress

Vision to Preservation

1,000 Acres Unlocked at Jackson-Washington State Forest

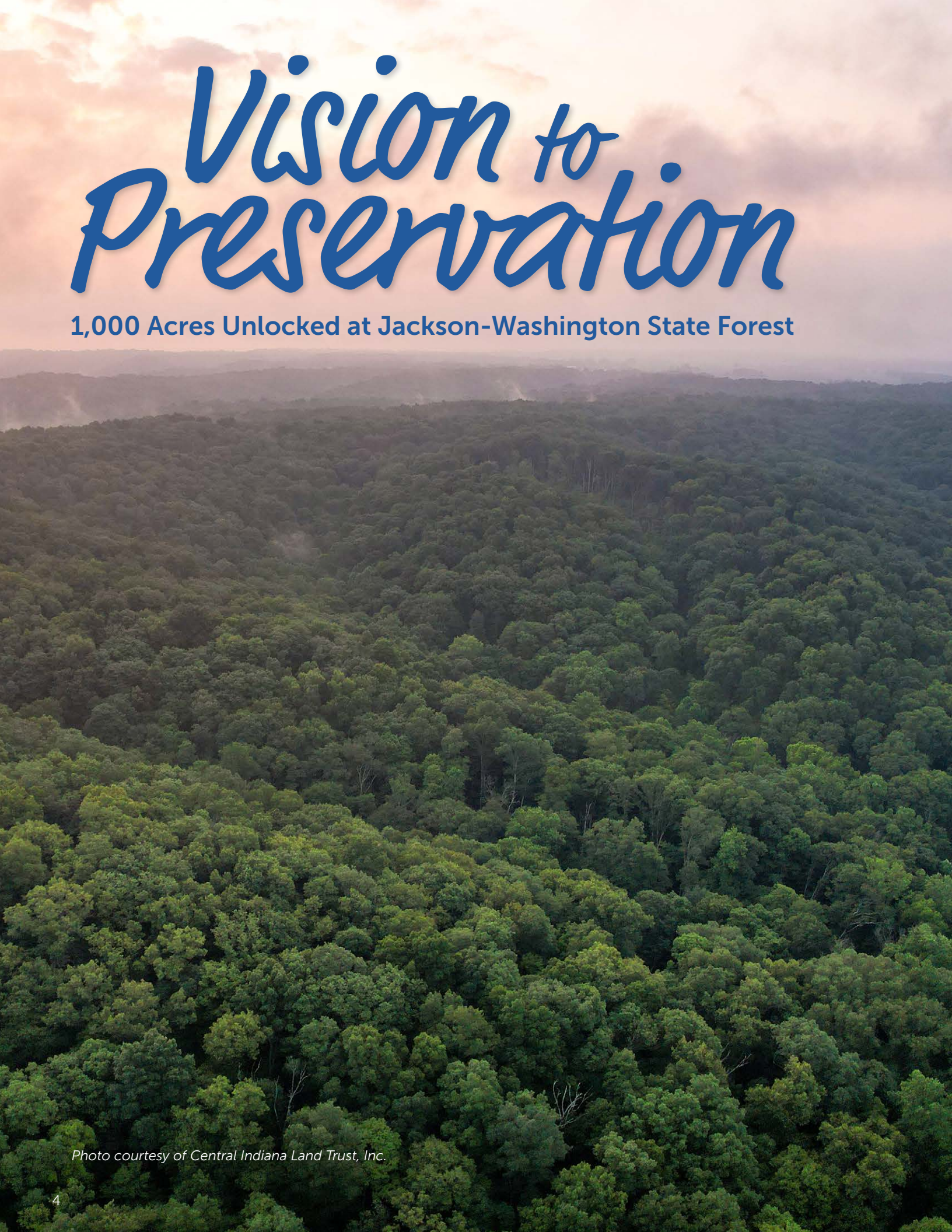
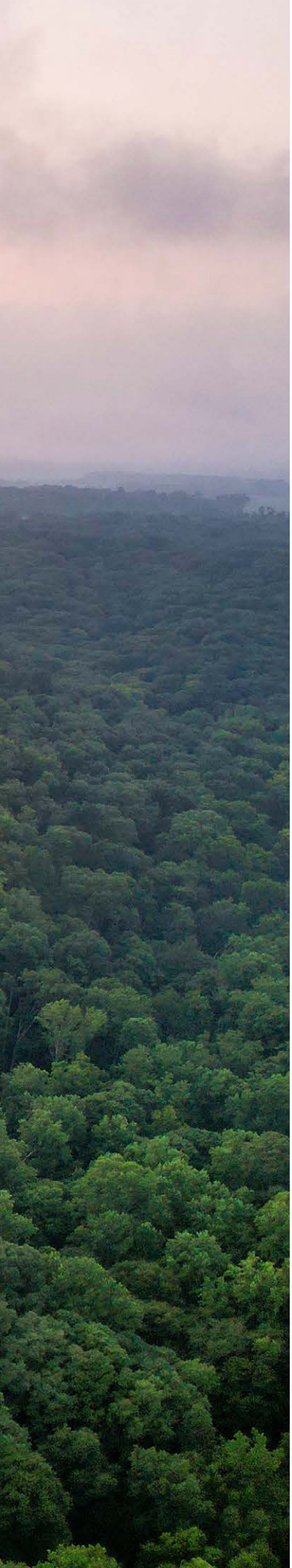


Photo courtesy of Central Indiana Land Trust, Inc.



For years, more than 1,000 acres of Jackson-Washington State Forest sat quietly behind private property lines, inaccessible to anyone who longed to explore its rolling ridges and distinctive southern Indiana landscape.

Indiana DNR long envisioned unlocking this remarkable stretch of forest and earlier this year that vision came to fruition. Thanks to decades of DNR staff dedication, donor and partner support, and the Indiana Natural Resources Foundation's ability to act swiftly, a once-inaccessible landscape will soon be open to welcome all Hoosiers.

This story began nearly two decades ago. In 2007, Brad Schneck, then property manager at Jackson-Washington, first met the family who owned the parcel that would one day unlock this area. Over many years and multiple generations, Brad and DNR nurtured a friendly relationship with the landowners and expressed continued interest in the property should they ever choose to sell. Those positive interactions ultimately opened the door to preserving this special parcel.

"I'm humbled we were given the opportunity," said Schneck, now assistant state forester at DNR. "This is a huge win for the citizens of Indiana and public lands. Now 1,050 acres will become available to all Hoosiers, not just those that have access across private land."

When the opportunity to purchase this parcel became available, the DNR asked the INRF for help because of the short sales window. Using its land acquisition fund, the INRF was able to acquire the property until the DNR coordinated funding through the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust which requires a 10% match. Central Indiana Land Trust, Inc. (CILTI) generously stepped in to provide the match.

"We were happy to assist," said Cliff Chapman, president of CILTI. "We created our Evergreen Fund for Nature precisely for this kind of opportunity. A key property goes on the market, and we are able to mobilize funding quickly to support our conservation partners. We couldn't do it without our many generous donors."

Because of this collaboration, a unique section of southern Indiana forest will soon be accessible to the public once the property transfers to the DNR. The addition of this parcel to Jackson-Washington State Forest is a story of vision fulfilled, landscapes preserved, and new adventures ahead. Ultimately, it's a story of what happens when partners come together to protect something special and ensure that it belongs to all Hoosiers in perpetuity.

The INRF's land acquisition fund is designed for this exact purpose. Your support helps make more stories like this possible. Together we will continue to celebrate and preserve Indiana's natural legacy by acquiring important parcels and expanding access to Indiana's treasured natural spaces.

Partners in Action

Northeast Indiana

More than $1.8 million raised, 882 acres of public land permanently protected, and more than 500 acres of habitat restored – the Northeast Indiana Conservation Partnership & Preservation continues to demonstrate what's possible when a community rallies behind a shared vision of expanding public lands and preserving our natural resources.

Earlier this year, at the group's biennial fundraiser, another $215,000 was raised, fueling the next chapter of land acquisition and conservation in the region. Two recent projects highlight this growing impact. Thirty-one acres were added to Elkhart Bog Nature Preserve, protecting more habitat for a variety of sensitive species such as the state-endangered Eastern massasauga rattlesnake. Thirty acres were also added to Trine State Recreation Area, protecting existing public lands from adjacent development and expanding outdoor recreation opportunities.

Pints for Parks

Moontown launched the Pints for Parks series in 2020 with the mission of supporting Indiana State Parks through innovative brewing. Now 19 beers into the series, Moontown has donated nearly $20,000 designated for special projects at Indiana State Parks. Each installment features a small batch brew and unique cans highlighting the featured property. From a dark and hoppy India Brown Ale for Brown County to the recent sour for Ouabache, each brew is a unique celebration of Indiana's outdoors.

Huston Solar

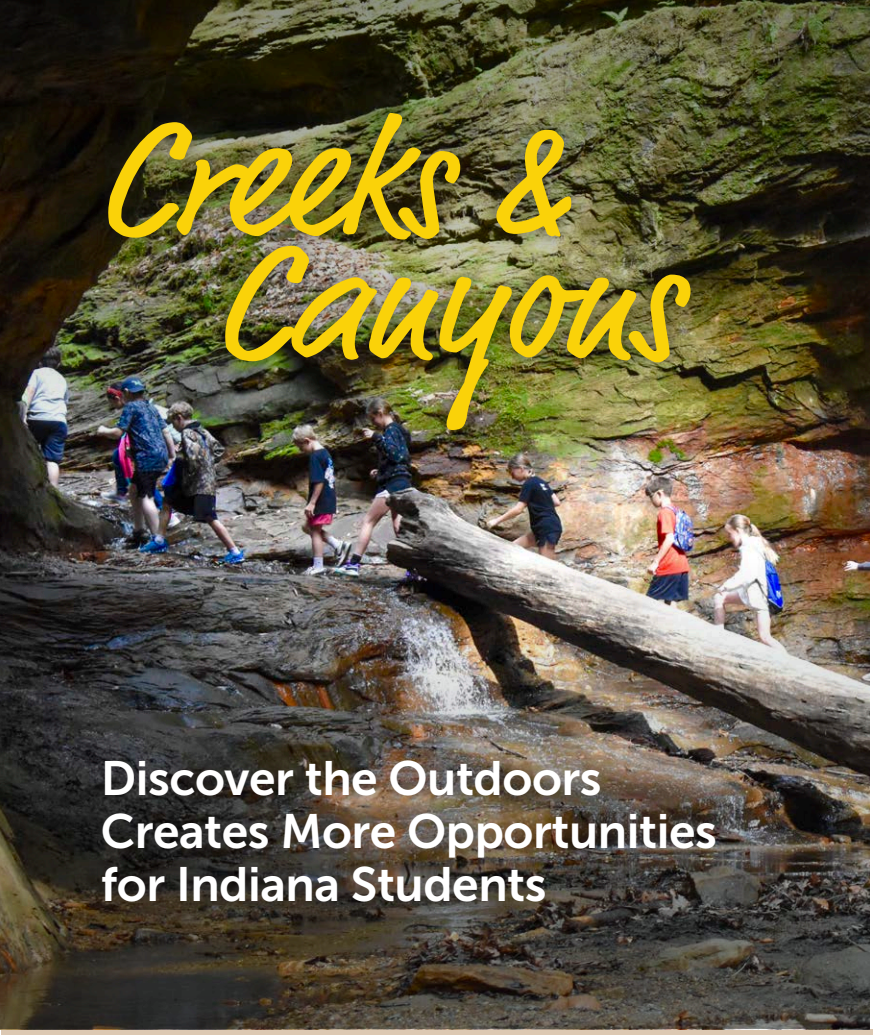
This spring, we once again joined our partners from Huston Solar at Prophetstown State Park as the group continued their support of the Indiana Tree Project. The volunteers have now planted more than 10,000 trees on Indiana's public lands throughout their four plantings. Their work this year continues to support Prophetstown's oak savanna habitat restoration efforts.

Learn more about these special partnerships and our other projects and programs at **IndianaNRF.org**.









Discover the Outdoors Creates More Opportunities for Indiana Students

Discover the Outdoors continues to expand its reach thanks to the generosity of our donors. In the 2026-27 school year alone, more than 5,000 students from 72 different schools will venture to an Indiana State Parks property. Since 2013, when the program began, nearly 36,000 Hoosier students have experienced a transformative outdoor experience.

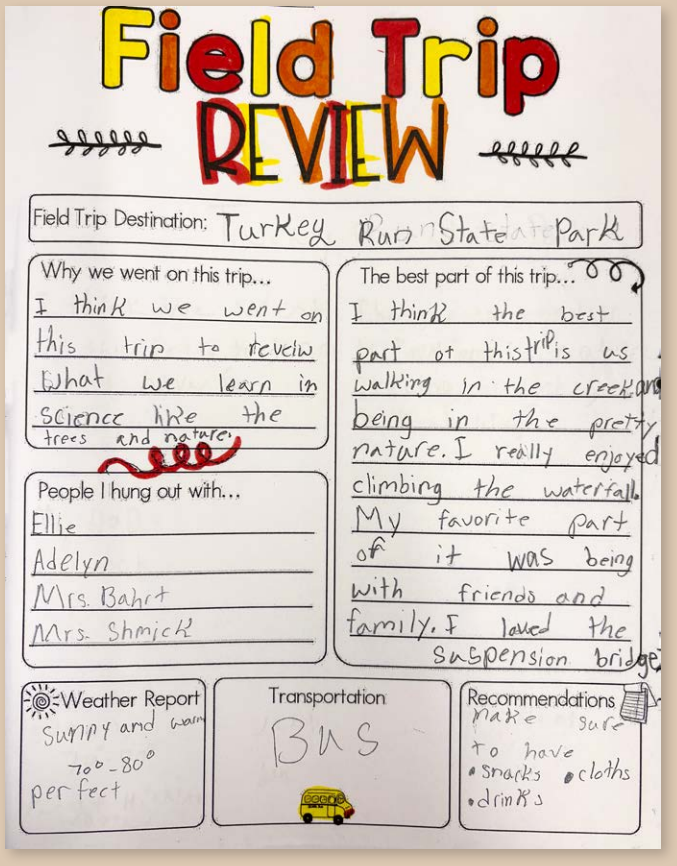
Earlier this year, we had the privilege of joining a group of fourth grade students at Turkey Run State Park where the power of getting kids outdoors was on full display. From exploring the creeks and canyons to learning about local history, the day was filled with adventurous experiences.

"I cannot express enough how much my students, colleagues, and our school community enjoyed the field trip," said Andrea Schmick, Sugar Creek Consolidated Elementary School teacher. "The number of students who came up to me, offering hugs and heartfelt thanks for writing the grant, was truly overwhelming and deeply appreciated."

Each Discover the Outdoors trip is an opportunity for students to create a lifelong connection to Indiana's outdoors. That opportunity is only possible with the generous support of our donors and partners. If you'd like to help inspire the next generation of Hoosier conservationists, consider donating today.

Visit IndianaNRF.org to find out more about the program and how to apply.

HEAR FROM THE STUDENTS


Field Trip REVIEW

Field Trip Destination: Turkey Run State Park

Why we went on this trip...
I think we went on this trip to review what we learn in science like the trees and nature.

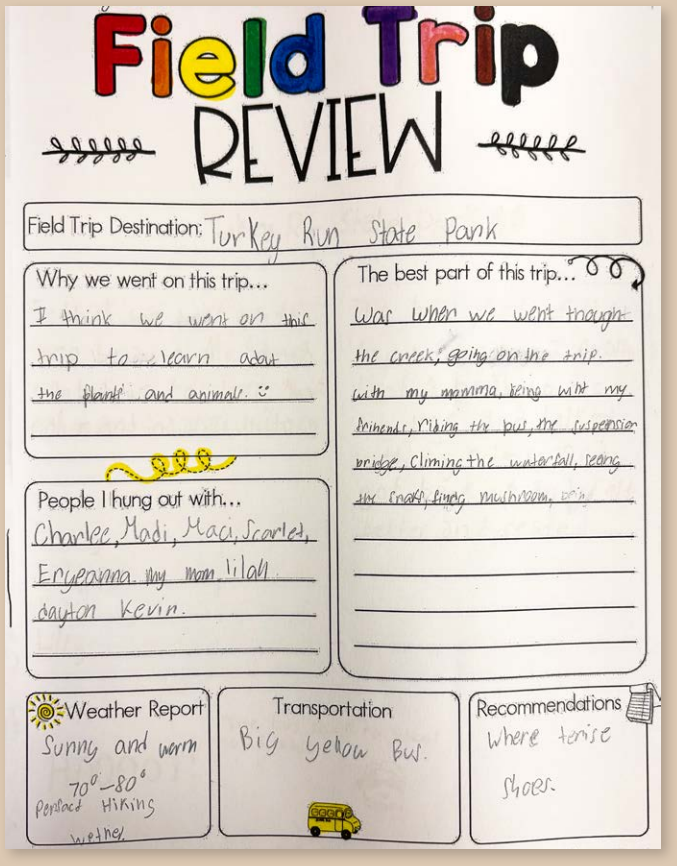
The best part of this trip...
I think the best part of this trip is us walking in the creek and being in the pretty nature. I really enjoyed climbing the waterfall. My favorite part of it was being with friends and family. I loved the suspension bridge.

People I hung out with...
Ellie
Adelyn
Mrs. Bahrt
Mrs. Shmick

Weather Report: Sunny and warm 70°-80° perfect

Transportation: BUS

Recommendations: make sure to have • snacks • cloths • drinks


Field Trip REVIEW

Field Trip Destination: Turkey Run State Park

Why we went on this trip...
I think we went on this trip to learn about the plants and animals. :)

The best part of this trip...
Was when we went trough the creek, going on the trip. with my momma, being with my friends, riding the bus, the suspension bridge, Climing the waterfall, seeing the creek, finding mushroom, ect.

People I hung out with...
Charlee, Madi, Maci, Scarlet, Enyeonna, my mom, lilah, dayton, Kevin.

Weather Report: Sunny and warm 70°-80° Perfect Hiking weather

Transportation: Big yellow Bus.

Recommendations: Where tenise Shoes.



Indiana
Natural Resources
FOUNDATION

DONATE TODAY AT
indiananrf.org/donate