



▲ Photo: Eagle Creek Park

Great American Outdoors Act Fully Funds LWCF, Invests in Federal Public Land Maintenance

By Drew YoungeDyke, National Wildlife Federation

The Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law in early August after a rare bipartisan push through both the Republican-controlled U.S. Senate and the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives. Hailed as historic conservation legislation for providing full and dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, it also provides funding for deferred maintenance on federal public lands and tribal lands, and all without costing taxpayers.

The John D. Dingell Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 permanently authorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) after it had expired the previous fall. While it was permanently authorized, it was not permanently or fully funded to its \$900 million allowance, which has only happened twice in its 55-year history.

continued on page 2 >>

Inside This Issue:

- CONSERVATION LEGISLATION
- LETTER FROM THE ED
- 2020 BIOBLITZ

p1

p3

p6

Since the funding for LWCF comes from royalties on oil and gas development from federal leases, particularly offshore, then the amount shorted was being diverted to other non-conservation uses.

"It's time to stop the shameful practice of diverting the money to other programs instead of investing in the parks, trails and public spaces that keep nature and wildlife within reach for future generations," said Tracy Stone-Manning, associate vice president for public lands at the National Wildlife Federation, in June of 2019, when the House version of what would become the Great American Outdoors Act was introduced by Rep. Jeff Van Drew (D-NJ).

In March 2020, President Trump surprised many by tweeting support for the Great American Outdoors Act to aid two Republican Senators up for reelection in public land strongholds of Colorado and Montana: "I am calling on Congress to send me a Bill that fully and permanently funds the LWCF and restores our National Parks," Trump tweeted. "When I sign it into law, it will be HISTORIC for our beautiful public lands. ALL thanks to @SenCoryGardner and @SteveDaines, two GREAT Conservative Leaders!"

Conservation groups urged Congress to pass the Great American Outdoors Act, citing the recovery jobs it would create in the deferred maintenance package for public lands, as well as in the federal, state, and local outdoor recreation projects funded by LWCF each year. Sen. Rob Portman's parks funding package in the bill also includes \$12 billion for maintenance on National Park Service lands.

"The Great American Outdoors Act now guarantees that our public lands and recreation areas will thrive for future generations to enjoy," said Matt Misicka, executive director of the Ohio Conservation Federation.

However, few National Park Service lands are open for hunting. The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation's Jeff Crane and the National Wildlife Federation's Collin O'Mara advocated to ensure that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management lands – typically open to hunting – were also included for deferred maintenance funding.

"The value of America's public lands for fishing, hunting and recreational shooting, especially as Americans seek refuge in the outdoors during these challenging times, cannot be understated," said Jeff Crane, president of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation.

A comprehensive push from multiple conservation organizations representing diverse recreational interests – including Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Trout Unlimited, and the National Wildlife Federation – activated their memberships to advocate for the GAOA as the Senate passed it in May and the House passed it in July. President Trump signed the Great American Outdoors Act into law on August 4, 2020 in a ceremony featuring Sen. Daines, Sen. Gardner, and Sen. Portman.

"The Great American Outdoors Act is a truly historic, bipartisan conservation accomplishment that will protect wildlife habitat, expand recreational opportunities, restore public lands and waters, and create good jobs," said Collin O'Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation.

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear IWF members and friends,

I want to say a heartfelt “thank you” to our wonderful members, partners, and friends who have checked in on our staff, offered support, and have been asking how they can help our organization continue to fulfill our conservation mission during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am happy to say that while the world is collectively experiencing this trying event in different ways, there have still been some very monumental successes in regional and national policy that we will discuss in this issue.



IWF has also had a number of successes with new sustainable trail certifications, as well as making advancements in our virtual programming and education. I am very proud of the flexibility and teamwork that our staff and board have demonstrated.

We are excited to share with you what we have been up to over the past few months as we continue to work remotely. Our staff is currently rotating through weekly trips into the office to monitor our mail, voicemails, and maintain other normal business operations. We appreciate your patience as we continue to adapt to the pandemic and look forward to finding efficient and effective new ways to do our work. As always, we couldn't do it without your support!

Yours in conservation,

Emily Wood, Executive Director

To safeguard the health of our staff and their families as well as the groups of wonderful people to whom we regularly present our programs, IWF will not be offering in-person programs for the remainder of this year.

During this hiatus, we hope you will consider a presentation over Zoom for your garden club meeting or other remote gathering.

To request a workshop or learn more about them, please email us at info@indianawildlife.org

Have You Renewed Your Membership Yet?

IWF's outreach, education, and advocacy would not be possible without the support of our dedicated members. By renewing your membership, you'll help promote common sense conservation in Indiana for years to come and strengthen our unified voice on critical wildlife and habitat issues.

It's easy to renew today, simply visit www.indianawildlife.org and click the RENEW button!



▲ Photo: Director of Natural Resources, Chandler Bryant and Sustainable Trails Coordinator Jenny Blake stand in front of the newly reopened section of trail in between the White River and the lake on the property.

Trails Update

IWF is excited to partner with Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park: 100 Acres at Newfields! This habitat-rich property is located along a beautiful stretch of the White River at 4000 Michigan Rd in Indianapolis. A network of trails will allow you to explore the woodlands, wetlands, meadows, and a 35-acre lake. Park management recently reopened a section of trail along the White River after years of erosion mitigation and native habitat restoration. Along this stretch of trail, you'll find yourself in between the river and the lake—not a view to miss! For more information visit

www.discovernewfields.org.



▲ Photo: Urban Wilderness Trail from the sky

The Urban Wilderness Trail (UWT) is expanding its wildlife habitat! The UWT has plans to add an additional native planting, titled Stairs to the White River, near the New York Street bridge in downtown Indianapolis. The planting will consist of a mix of sedges, grasses, and wildflowers that will tolerate seasonal saturation, as well as drier conditions during summer and fall. Once established, the plants will enhance the already habitat-rich river corridor by attracting more pollinators and other wildlife to the area. This amazing addition was made possible by Reconnecting to our Waterways (ROW) and the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust (NMPCT). Be on the lookout for potential volunteer opportunities this fall!

Fall Native Plant Sale!

Spring isn't the only time for planting natives. In fact, planting natives in the fall requires less maintenance and watering. If you didn't get to plant this spring or, let's be honest, if you just can't get enough of native plants, place your orders now for fall shipping! Orders are currently scheduled to ship around mid September and we will keep shipping until October.

Our website has recently been updated to include more specific species for each native plant kit. These are only guaranteed while supplies last, so the sooner you place an order the better the chance you will receive all of your plants.

As a reminder, we accept orders ALL YEAR LONG! If you place an order well in advance, the nursery will be able to grow your plant kit just for you!

If you're planning on certifying your garden or if you already have, you can show off your passion for native plants and help keep our plant sale going by purchasing a Certified Wildlife Friendly-Friendly Habitat sign! To certify your garden and purchase one of our IWF signs or to view the native plant kits on offer, visit indianawildlife.org/wildlife/native-plants/native-plant-sale



DNR Has a New Director

Dan Bortner, who has served as director of Indiana State Parks since 2005, is the new director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR). We look forward to working under his leadership to continue to improve our fish & wildlife areas, public access sites, and other public lands for fish, wildlife, and people.

On August 14, Governor Holcombe announced the establishment of two new Indiana state forests. Ravinia State Forest is 1,500 acres of wooded hills near Paragon and Mountain Tea State Forest is 1,150 near Nashville.





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2020 **bio**blitz

Southwestway Park

8400 Mann Rd, Indianapolis

August 24th - 31st

We will be hosting our first bioblitz this year at Southwestway Park! A bioblitz is an effort by local experts and scientists to catalogue plant and animal species in a location. We do this to examine biodiversity changes over time. If you want to participate as a citizen scientist, we are looking for volunteers to assist our scientists with their work. Times and dates for participation will be flexible. Volunteers need only bring an enthusiasm for nature.

For more information or to register, please visit indianawildlife.org/2020bioblitz



Corporate Sponsorship for Conservation

Does your business share the IWF vision of sustainable wildlife and wildlife habitats for Indiana? If your business would like to show its commitment to conservation and be highlighted for doing so through our communications and website, please contact us by email at info@indianawildlife.org or by phone at 317-875-9453