

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Historic Partnership Secures Nearly 4,000 Acres for Conservation and Future Public Recreation in Southern Indiana

BLOOMINGTON, Indiana – A groundbreaking collaboration has permanently protected 3,950 acres near the Lake Glendora Test Facility (LGTF) in Southern Indiana, creating the new Busseron Creek Fish & Wildlife Area, which will be open to the public in 2025.

The newly protected land will safeguard vital ecosystems and enhance future public recreational opportunities. The Busseron Creek project, spearheaded by the Conservation Law Center (CLC) and its Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape (SISL) initiative and powered by a multi-million-dollar investment by The Conservation Fund (TCF), demonstrates the power of partnerships in advancing conservation and community resilience.

The newly conserved land in Sullivan County, once part of Minnehaha Fish and Wildlife Area, is a cornerstone for biodiversity, clean water, and flood mitigation through its extensive wetlands. The property's transfer from TCF to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) ensures it will support public activities in the future such as hunting, hiking, kayaking, and bird watching, while also contributing to climate resilience and ecological health.

"Powered by partnerships, the permanent protection of Busseron Creek Fish & Wildlife Area is a win for conservation and a win for Indiana, returning nearly 4,000 acres of land for all Hoosiers to enjoy," said Dan Bortner, DNR director. "Whether you enjoy hunting, fishing, or viewing Indiana's magnificent wildlife, we look forward to welcoming Hoosiers and visitors alike to Busseron Creek when the property opens to the public in 2025."

At the heart of this effort was the CLC, leveraging its legal and strategic expertise to ensure the protection of this critical landscape, working alongside TCF as it negotiated the complex transaction for land valued at more than \$12 million. Michael Spalding, SISL Coordinator for CLC, highlighted the achievement's significance: "This project exemplifies what can be accomplished when organizations unite under a shared vision. Protecting this land secures environmental benefits for generations while strengthening national security and the region's resilience."

In late 2022, SISL identified an at-risk 191-acre parcel listed for sale on the open real estate market which was part of a larger 4,000-acre holding. Recognizing the urgent need to prevent land fragmentation, SISL and its partners secured funding and negotiated the acquisition from American Land Holdings of Indiana, a subsidiary of Peabody Energy. This approach ensured the land's ecological integrity and continuity for conservation. TCF provided immediate funding to secure the land for future public ownership, a critical investment that made the protection of this land truly viable.

In addition to the CLC and TCF, the partnership included key contributions from the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program acting through the US Navy, US Fish and Wildlife Service's Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the State of Indiana, and a competitive grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through Walmart's Acres for America Program.

"The Conservation Fund was glad to partner with SISL to secure this important property for conservation," said Emy Brawley, VP and Regional Director for TCF. "Protecting a site this large provides so much for so many. From recreation-based economic development to wildlife habitat to military readiness – this is the business of conservation, and it's where TCF shines."

"Walmart's Acres for America program is excited to be part of the innovative collaboration that made the Busseron Creek project possible," said Ryan Pettigrew, Senior Manager, Walmart U.S. Real Estate and Acres for America. "Acres for America aims to protect vital natural habitat and provide access to outdoor recreation, and this project will do just that in Southern Indiana for generations to come."

"The Nature Conservancy is proud to have helped set the wheels in motion for this project, and we're honored to have worked with this group of partners," said Larry Clemens, state director for TNC in Indiana. "As with TNC projects throughout the state, this investment in outdoor recreation and conservation will leave a permanent legacy for the natural heritage of Indiana."

The US Navy's REPI funding and strategic support were central to the success of this initiative, aligning with its partnership within the Sentinel Landscapes program in Indiana promoting compatible land uses surrounding Southern Indiana's military installations. By protecting the Busseron Creek watershed and surrounding lands, the US Navy has not only safeguarded key natural resources but also reinforced its commitment to ensure environmental sustainability near defense operations.

"The Busseron Creek Conservation Project and REPI program have allowed critical mission support and warfighter readiness to continue at LGTF while strengthening our community and conservation partnerships," said CDR Luis Martinez, Installation Commanding Officer of Naval Support Activity Crane. "We celebrate this innovative and collaborative effort by numerous organizations to enable military encroachment protections while providing community enhancement, conservation, and environmental stewardship."

The transfer of the property to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife ensures its stewardship now, with public access to follow at some point in the future. Once fragmented and at risk of development, the land will offer Southern Indiana residents and visitors the opportunity to connect with nature while benefiting from the area's clean air, clean water, and flood protection. The conserved area represents a victory for both nature and community well-being.

For more information concerning the Busseron Creek project contact:

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About the Conservation Law Center

The Conservation Law Center provides legal counsel and strategic support for conservation efforts, with a focus on protecting natural resources, promoting sustainable land use, and fostering climate resilience. Based in Indiana, the CLC's work spans land conservation, biodiversity protection, and public land advocacy to ensure a sustainable future for both people and the planet. The Conservation Law Center is dedicated to promoting conservation-focused land management and advocating for sustainable practices that balance environmental health and public benefit. To explore CLC's initiatives and commitment to natural resource protection, visit conservationlawcenter.org.

About the Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape

The Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape (SISL), led by the Conservation Law Center, is a collaboration of diverse partners who are advancing the pace and scale of conservation throughout a three and a half million-acre swath of south-central Indiana to protect military missions on four critical installations and ranges. SISL works to preserve and protect military missions, support sustainable farming and forestry, restore and sustain ecosystems, ensure thriving human communities, and improve climate resiliency.

About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities and sustainable economies. We apply effective strategies, efficient financing approaches and enduring government, community and private partnerships to protect millions of acres of America's natural land, cultural sites, recreation areas and working forests and farms.

About the Indiana Department of Natural Resources

The mission of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources 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. To satisfy such a broad and diverse responsibility, the Department is divided into two distinct areas of responsibility: the Regulatory Management Team; and the Land Management Team. The Regulatory Management Team consists of the Divisions of Water; Entomology and Plant Pathology; Historic Preservation and Archaeology; and Reclamation. Outdoor recreation and land management programs are housed within the Land Management Team. That unit consists of State Parks; Land Acquisition; Fish and Wildlife; Nature Preserves and Forestry. Learn more at dnr.IN.gov.

About The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, TNC creates innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. To learn about TNC's work in Indiana, visit nature.org/Indiana or find @TNCIndiana on Facebook.

About the Lake Glendora Test Facility

The Lake Glendora Test Facility (LGTF), a special area of Naval Support Activity (NSA) Crane, is located in Sullivan County, approximately 30 miles northwest of the main installation. Located in rural Sullivan County, the LGTF is surrounded by agricultural, forest, and rural natural lands.

The LGTF comprises about 450 acres containing multiple ranges on a near 100-acre lake for a variety of testing purposes. The facility's mission is to support proof of concept testing for risk reduction purposes prior to full scale or open water testing. The facility supports all Department of Defense branches, other warfare centers, private industry, academia, and other governmental organizations.

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