

Preserving Indiana lands laudable goal

Editorial staff
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At the same time heavy-duty construction work is continuing on Interstate 69 through northern Monroe County, the Sycamore Land Trust is working on a plan that would protect a significant amount of land in the area from development.

The land trust, with the support of numerous other community partners, is involved on a project that is part of the Bicentennial Nature Trust initiative, which in turn is part of the 200th birthday celebration for the state of Indiana. The mostly Monroe County project is called the Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area and would include acreage from near Lake Lemon on the east side of the county to the just across the western Monroe County line into Owen County near Gosport.

The entire Bicentennial Nature Trust idea, which began during the administration of then-Gov. Mitch Daniels, is a true gift to future generations of Hoosiers. It is forward-thinking for state leaders to set aside lands to maintain as wildlife habitat or as areas that would allow outdoor recreational opportunities.

The Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area is one of five conservation areas identified for funding support by the Bicentennial Nature Trust. The Sycamore Land Trust already protects some natural areas in the designated area, which also includes the City of Bloomington's Lake Griffy Nature Preserve and part of Morgan-Monroe State Forest. A \$1 million grant from the state nature trust can be used to purchase property in the area, and the land trust will work with willing sellers and donors to acquire land as it works to secure matching donations.

Nick Heinzelman is executive director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Land Acquisition, which is running the conservation program for the Indiana Bicentennial Commission. He said officials have looked all over the state for places that deserve to be protected, and the Beanblossom Creek area meets all the criteria.

Its one of those areas that just pops out on the map as important to protect, he told the H-T's Carol Kugler. He specifically noted that many of the acres have rare or endangered species living there, and that they also connect local, state and federal lands that are already protected.

Congratulations are in order to the Syca,have embraced this opportunity to preserve Hoosier lands. Development has its place, of course, but so do southern Indianas hardwood forests, creekbeds, hillsides, wildlife habitats and other natural amenities. Hoosiers like them and need them, and so do many birds, animals and other creatures that also call Indiana home..

That's why initiatives such as the Bicentennial Nature Trust are important. And its why the Sycamore Land Trust and other like-minded organizations deserve support.

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