Land trust adds 339 acres along Beanblossom Creek

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Another portion of wooded wetlands along Beanblossom Creek north of Bloomington has been purchased by Sycamore Land Trust.

The newest preserve the third-largest acquisition ever by the land trust is 339 acres and about a mile northwest of the Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve that Sycamore Land Trust already owned. The land was purchased through Indiana's Bicentennial Nature Trust, which requires a 1-to-1 match in funding used to purchase the land. The matching funds came from the Sam Shine Foundation, according to John Lawrence, Sycamore Land Trust assistant director.

Shine is a 1955 graduate of Indiana University's School of Business and is founder, president and owner of Samtech Inc. in New Albany. The company manufactures electronic connectors. Lawrence said Shine "has an interest in land conservation and Indiana," so it was a good fit for both Shine and the land trust.

This acquisition is the third purchase of land in what is known as the Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area, which is one of several such conservation areas that have been designated by the state. The Beanblossom area extends from the east side of Monroe County near Lake Lemon to the edge of Owen County near Gosport and includes roughly 20,000 acres of land. Sycamore Land Trust has been working since that designation to purchase land along Beanblossom Creek within that zone.

"Buying this land along Beanblossom Creek is part of that effort," Lawrence said.

The new preserve just off Mount Tabor Road north of Ellettsville has not yet been named, according to Lawrence, who said the land trust will work with Shine to come up with an appropriate one.

Lawrence said the land trust has been talking with landowners along Beanblossom Creek to let them know of the interest in acquiring land. This particular land was for sale on the open market. "It was good timing," he said.

Most of the property is bottomland along the creek that is known to flood. "That's the kind of land we're trying to preserve," Lawrence said.

Although most of the 339 acres is bottomland with open fields and some woods, the edge of the property includes a steep hillside and has an open field at the top of the hill. That could be where Sycamore Land Trust eventually constructs a parking lot so the public can access the land. At the present time, most of the bottomland is being used to grow corn and soybeans.

"The majority of it is in crop production," Lawrence said. The plan is to allow the land to be farmed for the next few years. "Then, we'll begin a restoration plan to get it back to nature and to wetlands," he said.

Lawrence said having the land near the Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve is "exciting. It's pretty neat because it's not that terribly far away. ... It's always nice to either add on to established preserve land or to get something close, where birds can fly between the properties."

(Scroll down for photos)

Beanblossom Creek photo

Beanblossom Creek photo

Beanblossom Creek aerial photo

Ironweed photo