Two meth bills still need a little work

By Zach Osowski

■ Committee ‘close’ to ironing out issues

INDIANAPOLIS — Lawmakers are “very close” to bridging the gap on two bills dealing with pharmaceuti- cists and the sale of pseudoephedrine medication.

Sen. Randy Haine, R-Lo-

unsport, said during a confer- ence committee on Senate Bill 10 that there are a few sticking points left between the version it was passed out of the Senate and what Rep. Ron Smal- t, R-

burn, pushed through the House.

The biggest concern, how- ever, is how much Sudafed a person who is not a patient of a doctor and who does not have a prescription, can purchase in a given time frame.

The current version of the bill says if a person has an existing relationship with a pharmacist, they can continue to purchase as much Sudafed as is allowed by state law. If a person is not a “patient of record” they will be offered a smaller amount of either Sudafed or meth-resistant medi- cations. If they refuse either op- tion, they would need to get a prescription.

The bill as written drops the amount of Sudafed a person can buy in a day to about 700 milli- grams, five times less than cur- rently allowed.

Other issues include concerns from INSPECT, the prescription monitoring board, and State Pharmacy Board. The definition of “pharmacist discretion” also needs to be finalized, Haine said.

Rep. Ron Bacon, R-Chandler, who is on the committee, said he is optimistic legislators will be able to work through the issues.

Bacon said he has been putting for an overhaul to the current system for about six years, trying to help curb the number of meth labs in Indiana.

“I really think after six years of trying to get this thing where it needs to be, it has to be done,” Bacon said.

The bills were echoed by House Speaker Brian Bosma, who has been advocating for a change in Indiana’s laws since the 2010 legislative session.

Bosma said the issues still need- ing ironed out are workable.

See METH, 11A

Hidden natural wonder

By Mark Wilson

A non-profit volunteer support group

“People are really just starting to find

us. We are getting more and more birders

there to offer.

While the refuge is both home and sanctuary, it’s a place

where they can walk and enjoy nature and see some interesting things,”

McCoys said. The historical aspects within the refuge boundaries also are beginning to be drawn attention, such as the Whirlwind Erie Canal, its connection to the Under- ground Railroad and the many old com- munities that have been growing into townships.

The refuge contains 20 miles of Patoka River, three miles of the South Fork Patoka, and five miles of old oxbows cut from the river.

However, the diversity of habitat within the refuge area is much broader than just wetlands. It includes what is considered one of Indiana’s best remaining bottom- land hardwood forest habitats as well as upland hardwood such as grasslands.

Not that surprising since the bound- aries of its acquisition area stretch across the Patoka River refuges just beginning to attract many locals to its beauty.

By Mark Wilson

Patoka River refuge just beginning to attract many locals to its beauty.

An immeasurable body of casual cruises aboard Old Ben Station at the Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge Tuesday afternoon.

Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge Specialist Heath Hamilton refuels a boat.

OAKLAND CITY — Thousands of migrating ducks, geese and swans stop in the Patoka River Valley along their way north every February and March.

The birds find temporary lodging in Pa- toka River National Wildlife Refuge and Management Area and other nearby south- west Indiana wetlands as they wait for their northern destinations to warm.

The Patoka is home to hundreds of wildlife species, ap- proximate 20 species of birds have been known to walk or enjoy nature and see some interesting things,”

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See PATOKA, 13A

See METH, 11A

Body cam bill changed again

By Zach Osowski

INDIANAPOLIS — A large part of the police camera bill was taken out during conference committee com- munication Tuesday, sending a balancing point between privacy interest and the police departments in- dividual.

Rep. Kevin Mahan, R-Lo-

unsport, introduced an amendment to House Bill 1125 taking out the rule mandating that low enforcement releases all videos pertaining to ex- cessive force or civil rights violations. In the version of the bill that passed out of the Senate, those vid- eos would be much easier to obtain than other body camera footage.

Mahan said he was fine with other changes to the bill, but not the release of the footage.

He said releasing every video pertaining to excessive force or civil rights violations could cause the police department to become an open- ing for illegal or improper behavior.

“I think we lose the benefit of the balance,”

Mahan said. “I don’t think the release is something we want to automatically release those videos.”

If the changes are ad- opted by the bill House and Senate next week, all police body cam footage will be released to the public.

A member of the Senate Judiciary Committee police enforce- ment agency to get a copy of a video.

The police chief or sheriff has the right to review or block video prior to release. If the request is denied, the police can appeal to
a local judge, who must hear the dispute within 30 days. The judge would then decide whether a lawsuit should be filed.

A provision allowing someone involved in a video to view the video twice with a lawyer is still included in the bill. State Sen. Brian Edwards, D-Corydon, said he was concerned the provision would allow law enforcement to "look at the tape" to prove why a video shouldn't be released.

The bill will now move to the Senate. If both chambers pass the legislation, it will go to Gov. Mike Pence for final approval.

"If both chambers pass the legislation, it will go to Gov. Mike Pence for final approval."

Friday. The bill will now move to the Senate. If both chambers pass the legislation, it will go to Gov. Mike Pence for final approval. He promised if changes were made they will be watched this year, if the bill goes into effect, to see how police departments interact with the public and media.

He promised if changes need to be made they will be addressed during the 2017 session.

Once the committee received the bill, it was assigned to the House Committee on Public Safety, which Christian Freitag, executive director of Sycamore Land Trust to Madison, Indiana, said "I make sense for Sycamore Land Trust to be involved because there are dozens and dozens of rare and sensitive species that call the refuge home. Wetlands and bottomland hardwood forests are the most valuable of the wildlife habitats that are at risk."

"They called refuges for a reason."

A concurrence on House Bill 107, updating Indiana's NPLEx system to include delinquent properties with drug-related offenses from buying Sudafed, was approved by the House on Thursday. The bill will now go to the governor for final approval.

"We can sit around and do 'what if' things to death. I don't believe in my heart of hearts that this is going to work."