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## Protecting Wilderness in the Midwest

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| <b>Application Date</b>      | 5/29/2024                      |  |                                      |
| <b>Applying Organization</b> | Indiana Forest Alliance        | <b>Grant Type</b>                            | Member Directed                      |
| <b>Requested Amount</b>      | \$50,000.00                    | <b>Project Name</b>                          | Protecting Wilderness in the Midwest |
| <b>Contact Name</b>          | Jeff Stant                     | <b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b> | IN                                   |
| <b>Contact Title</b>         | Executive Director             | <b>Project State/Province</b>                | IN                                   |
| <b>Contact Email Address</b> | jeff@indianaforestalliance.org | <b>Project Multiple Locations</b>            |                                      |
| <b>Notes</b>                 |                                | <b>Status</b>                                | Submitted                            |
|                              |                                | <b>Created By</b>                            | Jeff Stant, 5/29/2024, 6:38 PM       |

### Organization Details

|                          |                         |                                     |   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Organization Name</b> | Indiana Forest Alliance | <b>Annual Operating Budget</b>      | \$1,212,808.00  |
| <b>Applying Contact</b>  | Jeff Stant              | <b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b> | 501c3 Organization  |
| <b>Staff Size</b>        | 7                       | <b>Main Phone</b>                   | 3174897112  |
| <b>Total Membership</b>  | 1,500                   | <b>Website Address</b>              | https://www.indianaforestalliance.org                                   |
| <b>BIPOC-led</b>         | No                      | <b>Address</b>                      | English Fndn Bldg Fl 1<br>615 N Alabama St Ste A<br>Indianapolis, 46204 |
| <b>C-Suite Staff</b>     |                         |                                     |   |

### Proposal Questions

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| <p><b>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</b></p> <p>Indiana Forest Alliance (IFA) is Indiana's only state-wide organization dedicated to the conservation of Indiana's native forest ecosystem. Founded in 1998, our mission is to preserve and restore Indiana's native forests for the enjoyment of all. Indiana is located in the heart of what was once the largest temperate hardwood forest on the earth. Prior to European settlement, Indiana was almost entirely old growth hardwood forests. IFA envisions a reforested Indiana where</p> | <p><b>2. Final Success</b></p> <p>S2990, the Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area and Wilderness Establishment Act will be passed and signed by the President, adding approximately 15,300 acres to the Charles Deam Wilderness (more than doubling the size of Indiana's only wilderness to 28,253 acres) and establishing the 29,382 acre Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area surrounding the expanded wilderness area.</p> |
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everyone can enjoy a natural sanctuary in the complex modern world.

### 3. Location Details

By expanding the Deam Wilderness to the east, S2990 will protect some of the oldest and deepest hardwood forest within the Hoosier National Forest (HNF). Conservationists have been trying to save this wild and rugged forest east of Monroe Reservoir for fifty years since the area was proposed as one of the first Eastern Wilderness Areas in 1973, by HNF Supervisor, Claude Ferguson.

Portions of the forest in the Browning Hill Special Area are identified by the Forest Service as old growth forest. Chestnut oaks, American beeches, black gums and other trees exceed 300 years of age in some stands and much of the rest of the forest is within thirty years of returning to the old growth condition. The expanded Wilderness area includes 928-foot Browning Hill, pristine native hardwood forests covering long ridges, steep hillsides, tranquil hollows and many miles of sparkling clear streams. Names like Nebo Ridge, Panther Creek, Will Hay Branch, Fleetwood Branch, Bad Hollow, and Mose Ray Branch reflect the wildlife, history and people who've lived in the area.

The proposed wilderness area has immensely rich biodiversity and harbors reproducing populations five federal listed or proposed endangered bat species including the Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, and tricolored bat and the state endangered timber rattlesnake and cerulean warbler.

Allowing 28,253 acres of mature hardwood forest within an expanded Deam Wilderness to return to the old growth condition will oblige President Biden's Executive Order 14072 for federal agencies to combat climate change by using the nation's federal forests as carbon sinks. Protecting mature forest in the expanded Deam is key to the climate fight because half of the world's forest carbon is stored in the largest 1 percent of trees. Furthermore, this mixed, mesophytic hardwood forest does not burn easily making its protection an ideal long-term solution to the climate crisis.

The forest in S.2990 to be set aside as wilderness lies between the existing Deam Wilderness and the 16,000 acres of Brown County State Park. By connecting these two areas and establishing the adjacent Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area, S.2992 will protect an island of wild nature that exceeds 73,500 acres or 115 square miles, the largest expanse of wild

### 4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

The goals are to set aside a wild expanse of hardwood forest for enjoyment of nature in the nation's industrial heartland and protect the sole source of drinking water for 140,000 residents in Bloomington and surrounding communities. To meet these goals, our objective is to pass S. 2990, expanding the total protected acreage from 12,953 acres in the current Deam Wilderness to 57,652 acres in the expanded Deam Wilderness and NRA. This legislation will require every acre of the HNF within watersheds that drain to Monroe Reservoir to be managed to avoid erosion, protect the unique scenery and habitat of the area and promote dispersed recreation.

S.2990 received a crucially-important boost when US Representative Houchin introduced the legislation as H.R. 8535 in the House last week! H.R.8535 includes changes clarifying S.2990's language proposed by IFA and Sierra Club to allow 7 mountain biking trails to continue as nonwilderness corridors. This modified S.2990 was reintroduced in the Senate as S.4402 by Senator Braun. Once these companion bills are enacted, our followup objective will be to work with the Forest Service to manage the expanded wilderness and NRA to protect Monroe Reservoir, maintain existing trails and campsites, close worn-out trails and eroded campsites and develop new trails and campsites.

Accomplishing the following activities will achieve final success:

1. Building the Case for Recreation: In addition to protecting drinking water and rare, threatened and endangered species found in IFA biological inventories, establishing the expanded wilderness and NRA will bring more visitors. National Visitor Use Monitoring Data indicates the Deam has one of the highest usages of any Eastern US wilderness area. Protecting Nebo Ridge and Hickory Ridge in the expanded Deam Wilderness and the Starnes Branch watershed in the NRA will allow completion of the 160-mile Knobstone Trail, Indiana's longest backpacking trail, through protected forest returning to the old growth condition. Enabling access to this large protected island of nature by foot path from Indianapolis' south side nearly to Louisville, Kentucky and connecting the Knobstone to a network of trails in the expanded wilderness and NRA will provide an unprecedented primitive recreation experience in the lower Midwest while allowing for that recreation to be spread out over a

nature set aside for carbon sequestration, restoration of old growth forest, preservation of biodiversity and wilderness in Indiana, Ohio and Illinois

protected area more than four times larger than currently exists. This grant will help us prepare and sell the case for the wilderness from economic, scientific and human-interest perspectives.

2. Public Outreach: Outreach to citizens, businesses and local governments is essential to build grassroots support for the legislation. As we make recreational and economic benefits of this legislation clear, support for the legislation is building. The Town Council of Nashville, a major tourist community, and the City Council of Bloomington, largest city closest to the Deam, endorsed S.2990 in February and March respectively. We are approaching other City, Town and County Councils and Commissions, local Chambers of Commerce and Tourism Bureaus in Monroe, Brown, Jackson and Lawrence Counties. We are also approaching Saddle Clubs, Trail Associations, Hiking Groups, Mountain Bikers, Canoeists, Overlanders, Schools, Churches, Audubon and Garden Club Chapters, League of Women Voters, Urban League and two unions (IBEW and UAW).

3. Stakeholder Coalition-building: IFA worked with local residents for two years to agree upon the content of S.2990 before it was introduced. IFA also spearheaded considerable discussions with Sierra Club, Friends of Lake Monroe, and Citizens Climate Lobby which resulted in our joint proposal of improvements to S. 2990 that have been incorporated into the legislation. IFA is purchasing lists, recruiting volunteers and organizing phone banking campaigns integrated with text applications to reach Hoosiers throughout the state about the legislation. This concerted statewide campaign with local residents, these organizations and new recruits throughout 2024 will convince decision makers to pass S.4402/H.R.8535.

The legislation will establish a Federal Advisory Committee made up of local governments, local residents, government land managers, conservation and recreation groups, and forest experts. The Committee must develop a plan with the Forest Service to manage the NRA for recreation, conserving scenic and ecological values and protecting Monroe Reservoir. From multiple partnerships forged to pass S. 2990, we will advocate for key stakeholders to serve on this committee.

Through these three strategies, we are building public support for enacting the legislation and partnerships for managing the area afterwards. This work's timeline is 3 years: building the

case for wilderness and the groundswell of support to pass S.4402/H.R.8535 in the first two and engaging the Advisory Committee in decisions about NRA management in the third.

#### 5. Key Decision Makers

Senator Mike Braun: Braun is a conservationist with a deep love for Indiana's woods. His working relationship with our executive director, developed when Braun was a state representative, enabled IFA to convince Braun of the need to conserve the wild forest surrounding the Deam Wilderness and introduce S.2990. IFA regularly discusses the legislation directly with Mike and his staff encouraging their continued focus on the steps to enact this legislation in 2024.

Congressmen Jim Banks: Should S.4402 not become law before Braun leaves office in his bid to become Indiana's next Governor, Mike has approached his colleague Indiana's 3rd District Congressman, Jim Banks, to introduce the legislation in 2025. Banks is heavily favored to fill Indiana's open Senate seat in 2024. Banks staff has met with IFA twice to discuss the legislation.

Congresswoman Erin Houchin: The location of the expanded wilderness and NRA in Indiana's 9th Congressional District, made it vital to persuade 9th District Congresswoman Erin Houchin to introduce S. 2990 in the House of Representatives which was prompted by support of local governments, constituents and Senator Braun's influence. IFA's executive director maintains regular contact with Houchin's Legislative Director.

Senator Todd Young: Convincing Indiana Senator Young to cosponsor S. 2990 will help ensure its speedier passage by the Senate. Young's staff told IFA that securing Houchin's introduction of the bill in the House, will be key to convincing Senator Young to cosponsor S. 2290.

USDA: Senator Braun and IFA have established constructive relationships with USDA Undersecretary Harmon Wilkes and Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. We are discussing implementation of the legislation with the Forest Service which remains neutral on the legislation.

#### 7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

1. Widespread public support for expansion of the Deam Wilderness and creation of the Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area and stakeholders committed to making this vision a reality.
2. 15,300 acres added to the Charles Deam Wilderness.
3. A 29,382 acre National Recreation

#### 6. Elevate Voices

We are working to establish a partnership with Native American tribes, such as the Lenape and Shawnee, who have historically been connected with the area. We are in the early stages of this and realize the great importance of elevating their voices. Initial conversations have been very positive and shown support for further protection of this wilderness.

The proposed Wilderness Addition and NRA are near a very special historic town called Freetown. This area is home to many artifacts and history of free African Americans (never enslaved) in America. IFA has been leading hikes to an historic African American settlement, known as Paddy's Garden in a nearby County in the HNF to see artifacts and to discuss the history of this settlement.. We are partnering with Indiana Historical Society, Indiana University and Sierra Club on this effort. S. 2990 has historical significance for African Americans because of its proximity to Freetown. With TCA's support, we will amplify African American and Native American voices while highlighting the historical significance of this area which is often overlooked or unknown.

Protecting wild nature that is accessible to populations in inner cities is tremendously important for equity in the region. Passing S.2990 will establish the largest protected wild forest area in the lower midwest and one of the only such protected forest areas of significant size. This is extremely significant for marginalized and underrepresented groups because it is located within a one hour drive of Indianapolis and 1.5 to 2 hours of other major cities such as Louisville and Cincinnati. Unlike many other American urban areas, minority residents in these cities and communities with lower incomes simply have no other wild expanse of this size to enjoy within a half day's drive and lack the incomes to afford trips to more distant locations.

#### 8. Evaluate Your Progress

A groundswell of public support must emerge from key areas at key times. We will evaluate our effectiveness in generating responses tracked with new outreach software from a social media/email/text/phone banking campaign involving at least 200,000 residents within Indiana and if needed, thousands more in key states and

Area surrounding the expanded Charles Deam Wilderness.  
 4. A federal law enacted that requires federal activities to protect drinking water in Monroe Reservoir.  
 5. A federal law enacted that enables establishment of camping opportunities and long distance hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and mountain biking trails through a wild expanse unsurpassed in the states of Indiana, Ohio and Illinois.

districts outside Indiana of Chairs and ranking members of the Senate and House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committees. We will document support by local residents, governments and businesses, and outreach by partner organizations.

We will document whether and how the legislation is passed in 2024 or 2025. If the legislation is enacted, we will evaluate whether the Advisory Committee is established, whether it includes partners who worked to enact the legislation, whether it is implementing steps to accomplish the legislation's goals and is engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Forest Service to produce the plan mandated for the NRA.

**9. TCA Funding Plan**

Funding will be used for staff time researching the legislation's benefits and making presentations to local governments and other stakeholders, social media ads and operationalizing an outreach campaign garnering widespread support for expanding the Deam Wilderness. IFA has been building an enhanced data base and acquiring software (NGP Van, Mobilize and Every Action), stronger texting ability (Scale To Win, Reach) and lists for targeted areas (from SMART Van or L2). TCA funds will arrive at a crucial time for continuing this outreach at the high level that prompts Congressional enactment in 2024 or lays the groundwork for enactment in 2025.

**10. JEDI Efforts and Impact**

IFA is addressing environmental equity in our Forests For Indy (FFI) program. We mapped urban forests throughout Indianapolis and revealed that underserved communities have the least tree canopy. We advocate for forest acquisition and preservation in zoning decisions before decision-making bodies in Indianapolis so communities have the benefits that forests provide, a growing imperative in the age of climate change.

In the last year, we have partnered with EWAY Foundation, an African American run nonprofit that educates communities about trees. IFA staff taught about forests in an innercity summer camp. We engaged a professional firm to conduct focus groups in three minority neighborhoods in Indianapolis to understand their relationships with urban forests and enlist their participation in decisions that affect those forests and their quality of life. This work has made multiple inner city residents IFA supporters. We are cultivating them to become tomorrow's IFA leaders.

**11. Confidential Items**

There is nothing in our proposal that needs to be kept confidential.

**Other Relevant Application Details**