



United States Department of Agriculture

HOOSIER *National Forest*

2017-2018 Highlights

The Hoosier National Forest, one of Indiana's premier natural treasures, offers high quality, resilient and rare ecosystems that provide diverse outdoor recreational experiences. We provide outstanding stewardship by restoring, maintaining and interpreting our public's cultural and natural resources.



From Mike Chaveas, Forest Supervisor



Welcome to your Hoosier National Forest. In the following pages, you will find a sampling of the great work Hoosier employees are doing on your behalf as the collective owners of these 204,000 acres of public land. 2017-18 were years of tremendous accomplishments on the Hoosier in terms of both the good that was done for the resources of the American people, and in our efforts to connect as many people as possible to their National Forest.

We continued our focus on improving the health and diversity of the forest, improving regeneration of oak ecosystems, providing diverse wildlife habitat, controlling the spread of non-native invasive species in targeted areas and improving water quality and aquatic habitat. Work along these lines is ongoing in several parts of the Forest and was assisted in 2018 by our third and final year of additional funding through the Hoosier Hills and Highlands Joint Chiefs' Project in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), The Nature Conservancy and the IN Department of Natural Resources. This project has been enormously successful in helping us increase the pace of work aimed at oak regeneration, treatment of invasive plants and improvements to aquatic habitats and water quality, while the NRCS has assisted private landowners in the area with similar measures. For the last three years, work to promote diversity of habitat and of native tree species across all age classes using timber harvests has reached the levels called for in our 2006

Forest Plan, an important milestone in achieving these benefits while supporting local economies with the supply of renewable and sustainably managed resources.

An important component of forest restoration includes the re-introduction of fire on the landscape, which was a regular occurrence in Indiana for centuries, helping to promote oak regeneration and maintaining a mosaic of forest age classes and structures. Our season for prescribed fire is weather dependent and tends to occur in the fall and early winter as well as the spring. We take advantage of the opportunities the weather gives us to safely put fire on the ground and we greatly appreciate the support of the local public and partners in helping get this critical work accomplished.

The list of other activities around the Forest and by our employees is lengthy, from maintenance of trails and recreation facilities, to hosting or participating in many public outreach events, and coordinating with partner organizations on shared goals. Throughout our day to day work, the Forest remains committed to being a model of efficient use of public funds, a place where employee growth and development are prioritized, a professional and respectful work environment, and an overall rewarding place to work. All of our efforts on the land aim to be inclusive of potential partners and volunteers, and transparent to interested publics, and we always seek new and creative ways to connect our communities to their National Forest and all of its benefits.

I hope you will read these pages with great interest and join us in celebrating another productive year on the Hoosier National Forest.

2017-18 Accomplishments from National Report

Resource Area	2017 Accomplishments	2018 Accomplishments	5 year average
Acres of forest vegetation established	190 acres	202 acres	245 acres
Acres of forestland vegetation improved	2,066 acres	1,078 acres	1,423 acres
Acres of prescribed fire for ecological restoration and risk reduction	2,408 acres	1,467 acres	1,702 acres
Number of recreation sites maintained to standard	38 sites	58 sites	42 sites
Miles of trail maintained	112 miles	70.26 miles	77.69 miles
CCF of timber volume sold through active forest management	9,561 CCF	11,636 CCF	9,459 CCF
Acres of lake habitat restored/enhanced	21.30 acres	18.68 acres	28 acres
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	3.01 miles	18.57 miles	5 miles
Acres of terrestrial habitat restored/enhanced	3,587 acres	2,763 acres	3,106 acres

Sustain Our Nation's Forests and Grasslands

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Project

2018 was the final year of the three-year Indiana, Hoosier Hills and Highlands Oak Community Restoration Partnership which centered around the lack of oak community regeneration and the potential long-term impact on native forest wildlife populations, plant diversity, and water quality; along with national, regional and local economies. The Hoosier National Forest, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, The Nature Conservancy and other organizations focused their efforts into one landscape-scale partnership on both public and private lands, to promote oak communities, oak regeneration, improve water quality and improve wildlife habitat, such as pollinators and aquatic organisms, in the region. Outcomes included:

- Oak community restoration management on roughly 9,600 acres
- Implemented nonnative invasive species (NNIS) control on 16,100 acres
- Put over \$3.7 million directly into the local economy
- Planted roughly 60,000 seedlings to improve water quality and wildlife habitat
- Directly employed 2 term employees and 2 permanent Forest Service employees
- Educated roughly 180 local landowners on oak communities and NNIS
- Restored natural fire regimes on 215 acres to promote oak communities
- Worked on design options to remove the Hickey Martin dam
- Controlled erosion for water quality on 1.9 miles of recreational trails
- Restored 9,400 ft of logging roads and skid trails
- Planted 115 acres of pollinator habitat
- Completed approximately 200,000 acres of aerial surveys to identify female Ailanthus trees



Pictured: Left, Private land after removal of shade tolerant mid-story; Right, worker controlling NNIS on forest land

632 New Hoosier Acres!

The Hoosier National Forest grew by 632 acres in 2018, due to the acquisition of six different properties located in Monroe, Lawrence, Jackson and Crawford Counties. Funding for the purchase of these new additions was provided to the Hoosier NF from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). These properties range in size from 14 acres to 200 acres, three of which immediately adjoin Monroe Lake. 360 acres are the product of patience, persistence, and longstanding partnership between the Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy. An additional 14 acres was made possible through a collaboration with Sycamore Land Trust.



Pictured: Recent property acquisition in Monroe County

Aquatic Organism Passage Projects

Multiple AOP projects are currently underway. Two low-water concrete crossings in Jackson County will soon be replaced by full channel spanning bridges. The new bridges will allow year round access for fish and other aquatic species to 10 miles of upstream habitat. At least 15 native stream fish species will benefit from these projects.



Pictured: Current low-water crossings in Jackson County

Deliver Benefits to the Public

Health and Public Lands

The Hoosier National Forest and Indiana University Health entered into a partnership agreement to create a “Health and Public Lands” pilot program. The goals of the program are to provide therapeutic nature-based experiences for at-risk community members on national forest system lands, and strengthen community ties to public lands. The first wellness hike was held in October 2018. Additional public events are planned for 2019, including more wellness hikes, wellness sessions for Hoosier NF employees, and a service day on the forest.



Pictured: Participants in the first wellness hike

Outreach and Education

Continuing the Hoosier National Forest’s long commitment to public education, employees participated in numerous outreach activities in 2017 and 2018. These included classroom visits, community events, and large forest-hosted gatherings focused on youth and recreation. In 2018, the Hoosier National Forest began hosting “It’s All Yours” events which invited the public to learn more about each program area on the forest. Nearly 20 of these events happened in the inaugural year, and the program will continue in 2019.



Pictured: Above, Get Outdoors Day 2017, It’s All Yours 2018, Adventures with Nature 2017; Below, Smokey’s Birthday 2017, National FFA Convention 2017 (with Sec. of Agriculture Sonny Perdue), Fishing Day 2018. All events have been held for multiple years and will continue.

Deliver Benefits to the Public

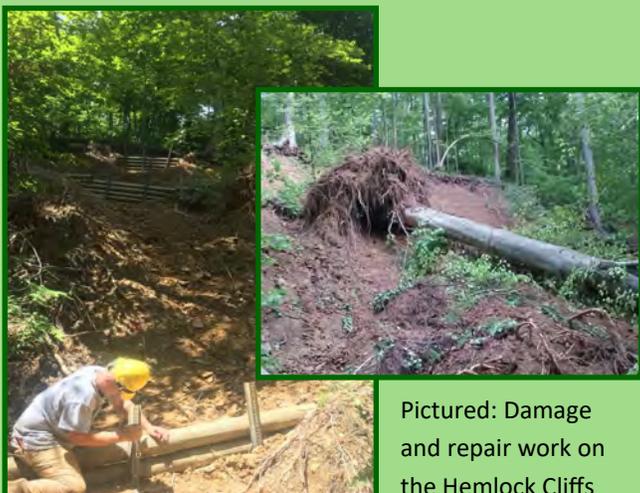
Trail Work and Partnerships

There are over 260 miles of trails available for public use on the Hoosier National Forest. In order to maintain these trails, the Hoosier NF frequently utilizes volunteers and partners. In 2017-18, the forest developed three new partnership agreements for trail maintenance: Hoosier Backcountry Horsemen and the Knobstone Hiking Trail Association (KHTA) for assistance with the Hickory Ridge trails, and the Hoosier Mountain Bike Association to assist with the Brown County D and Nebo Ridge trails. The agreement with the KHTA for trail assistance builds on the relationship established in 2017 through a Memorandum of Understanding that allows the route of the Knobstone Trail (KT) to follow the route of several already existing trails in the Hickory Ridge trail system of the Hoosier NF. The KHTA also facilitated a partnership with the Boy Scouts National Order of the Arrow, who provided members to help fix a poorly drained section of trail 18 in the Hickory Ridge trail system in August of 2018. Working with Hoosier NF staff and KHTA volunteers, they installed approximately 150 feet of French drain and turn-pike on a wet and muddy section of trail, and a culvert in an erosion ditch.



Pictured: National Order of the Arrow members work to repair part of the Hickory Ridge trail system

In addition to regular maintenance needs, occasional severe weather events create immediate safety concerns that must be addressed quickly. For example, in late April 2017, a mudslide occurred at the popular Hemlock Cliffs Trail in Perry County. Forest personnel from multiple disciplines were called into action. They had to remove debris, reshape the trail, and construct a retaining wall. In 2018, erosion control logs and culverts were put into place. This rehabilitation project will be finished in spring 2019 with seeding and planting trees.



Pictured: Damage and repair work on the Hemlock Cliffs Trail

Apply Knowledge Globally

Oriole Research Project



Pictured: Pre-burn work to install devices capable of measuring fire behavior and fire effects of prescribed burns, along with sampling of litter and duff layers

This project was initiated in 2010 on the Tell City Ranger District of the Hoosier National Forest. The study is a combined effort by the Hoosier NF, USFS Northern Research Station, and Purdue University's Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. This is a long-term, repeated measure study designed to compare two overstory density levels (created by a shelterwood and a commercial thinning), herbicide treatment, and a prescribed fire treatment on the development of oak reproduction compared to reproduction of other species. Initial shelterwood cuts left approximately 30-40% of the original stand basal area. The majority of leave trees were dominant and co-dominant oaks. Most slash created from harvest was left on-site. The study plan calls for a prescribed burn to take place in half of the research plots a few years after the initial harvest. This burn is scheduled to take place in spring of 2019.

This important research will help guide future management on the Hoosier NF and many other private and public forests throughout the Central Hardwood Region.

New Indiana Prescribed Fire Council

As prescribed fire use has emerged as one of the primary natural resource management tools on public and private lands, many states have organized Prescribed Fire Councils. After several years of planning, in 2018 the Indiana Prescribed Fire Council was officially created. The organization's mission is to promote the safe use of prescribed fire in the management of Indiana's diverse ecological systems. Purposes of the council include: sharing of information and experiences; promoting safety and training in prescribed fire use; promoting public education and understanding of fire's role in ecosystem management and hazardous fuels reduction; identifying and facilitating prescribed fire research; and serving as a recognized group of experts, scientists, practitioners in prescribed fire to provide technical and scientific expertise that informs decisions, guidelines and policy related to prescribed fire. The Hoosier NF has been actively engaged in the creation of this council and is committed to participating fully in the implementation of the council's goals.



Pictured: Above, firefighter monitors prescribed burn in March 2018; Below, employees from three agencies attended annual fire refresher hosted by the Hoosier NF

Excel as a High-Performing Agency

Focus on Collaboration

In 2018, the Hoosier National Forest hosted three collaboration meetings with partners, stakeholders, and interested members of the public. Meeting objectives included the desire to convene groups that have an interest in the future of the Hoosier NF; to discuss shared values and goals for the Hoosier; and to gauge the interest in more long-term collaborative investment in the future management of the National Forest.



Pictured: Vicki Gullang-Harris and collaboration meeting participants



Chief's Visit

In July of 2017, the Hoosier National Forest hosted the Chief of the Forest Service, Thomas Tidwell, for a forest tour. The Chief was presented with information about our prescribed burning program, timber program, recreation facilities, and heritage highlights.

Pictured left to right: D. Kidd, S. Harriss, K. Voiles, C. Zimmer, J. Harrison, M. Chaveas, G. Scott, T. Tidwell, J. Combs, C. Thornton, M. Fenn

Above and Beyond

Wilderness Ranger Rod Fahl received a joint award from the Hoosier and Shawnee National Forests for his dedication to the continued success of the stock program. Mules are necessary for field work in federally designated wilderness areas, such as the Charles C. Deam on the Hoosier NF, where motorized and mechanized equipment is prohibited.



Pictured: Rod Fahl and mule Belle

Invaluable Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of how work gets done on the Hoosier National Forest. Without the time, dedication, and passion of these individuals, Hoosier NF lands and facilities could not be so well-maintained. We sincerely appreciate each person who works to preserve public lands for future generations.

	2017	2018
Volunteers	254	225
Volunteer Hours	17,447	10,204
Value of Service	\$421,172	\$251,936

2017-2018

Payments to Counties

Although National Forests do not pay property taxes, funds are paid in lieu of taxes to compensate local government for land taken off the tax rolls. The payments were received from two contributing funds. The Hoosier National Forest also provides funds for road projects, cooperative law enforcement, and volunteer fire department support.

County	N.F Acres	2017 Total	2018 Total
Brown	18,200	\$14,737	\$13,646
Crawford	24,421	\$32,552	\$35,375
Dubois	427	\$239	\$213
Jackson	22,963	\$20,765	\$20,451
Lawrence	16,477	\$17,422	\$16,402
Martin	9,696	\$9,218	\$10,360
Monroe	18,948	\$20,201	\$18,113
Orange	32,805	\$37,424	\$37,254
Perry	60,370	\$68,944	\$69,787
Total	204,307	\$221,507	\$221,606

Hoosier National Forest



811 Constitution Avenue
Bedford, IN 47421
812-275-5987
www.fs.usda.gov/Hoosier



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