



President's Report

2025: A Year of Change

Our mission is to support Indiana State Parks and Nature Preserves, the resources they steward and the people they serve. During a year of state and IPA leadership changes, we have continued that mission through advocacy and fundraising.



Our advocacy efforts have focused on the impacts of shrinking operational and preventive maintenance budgets for state parks and nature preserves. Government is good at deferring actions. Deferred means to “put off” an action or event to a later time or “to postpone.” The state has often funded new projects or spent money on major rehabilitation of facilities and then forgotten about them for 30-40 years. A better approach is spending monies to prevent depreciation and implementing a true preventative maintenance commitment. Facilities and natural areas would look better and provide a consistent experience for its visitors. The long-term cost for maintaining facilities would also be less. We continue to work towards that end with legislators and partners.

After nearly ten years of not raising fees, the Natural Resources Commission approved some fee increases for state parks in 2025. Indiana State Parks operations (staffing, cleaning, interpretive programs, mowing, supplies, utilities, and more) are approximately 90% funded by user fees. We support these approved increases. Deferring (that word again!) fee increases for long periods as costs rise puts pressure on the operation of our state-run facilities. More frequent increases would help maintain our status as one of the best state park systems in the nation. The public is generally more receptive to small fee changes rather than large increases once in a decade. IPA will continue to advocate for regular fee increases that fully support operational needs.



Tom Hohman addressing legislators in 2025

We will also continue to advocate for General Fund support and for an adequate operational budget, which is established every two years by Indiana's legislature. We marvel at the dedication of DNR employees and what they accomplish, especially during tight financial times. Operating with a significantly reduced budget for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027, DNR employees are maintaining most services to visitors and finding assistance from dedicated volunteers and friends groups. We appreciate and thank these dedicated folks.

IPA also provided testimony before the Natural Resources Interim Study Committee on the economic value of public land for health and recreation, and at legislative budget hearings on the financial short fall of state parks funding mentioned above. We worked in partnership with other organizations

through the Indiana Conservation Alliance (INCA) to give voice to conservation issues for all public lands. IPA is a respected and knowledgeable voice with our legislators. We will continue to educate our leaders and help those leaders make the right decisions for our state parks and nature preserves.

Supporting Indiana State Parks and Nature Preserves with funding is also a key element of our mission. The number one activity at Indiana State Parks is hiking. Therefore, IPA's focus has been and will continue to be on trail evaluation and fundraising for support of trail-related projects. In 2025 IPA awarded more than \$20,000 for wayfinding signage at six properties. We hope to see that signage in



Clifty Falls State Park guest using a wayfinding trail map installed with funding from IPA. Photo by Melissa Dietel, 2025.

place for hikers in 2026, and invite contributions to add signage at more properties. IPA also funded small projects for several properties through their friends groups totaling nearly \$10,000.

IPA has added several new members to the board this past year. Our board members have a wealth of practical knowledge in areas of public service, academia, business and financial services. I am honored to follow Tom Hohman in the role of President after celebrating his success from IPA's beginnings in 2014 through most of 2025.

We all look forward to your encouragement and support in 2026 as we build relationships with new agency and state governmental leadership and continue our mission to speak for and financially support Indiana's State Parks and Nature Preserves.

-Milt Grissom

2025 IPA Board Members

Thanks to these leaders for their service to Indiana's State Parks and State-Owned Nature Preserves through the Indiana Parks Alliance.

Milt Grissom
President
Franklin

Clare Oskay
Treasurer
Rockville

John Bacone
Indianapolis

Brittany Davis-Swinford
Indianapolis

Sarah Nichter
Fort Wayne

Joe Wynns
Indianapolis

Tom Hohman
Past President
Plainfield

Rachel Perry
Secretary
Nashville

John Bergman
Fishers

Sonok Deutscher
Avon

Jerry Pagac
Bloomington

Mark Young
Vice President - Development
Louisville

Tom Burkhart
Shelburn

Layne Elliot
Bloomington

Jeff Seidenstein
Carmel

John Goss
Vice President - Advocacy
McCordsville

Stacy Cachules
Indianapolis

Terri Gorney-Lehman
Fort Wayne

Dave Williams
Bloomington

Justin Coleman
Zionsville

Ginger Murphy
Franklin

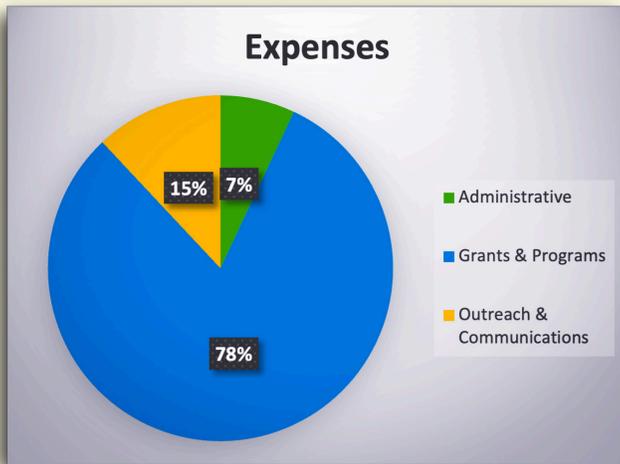
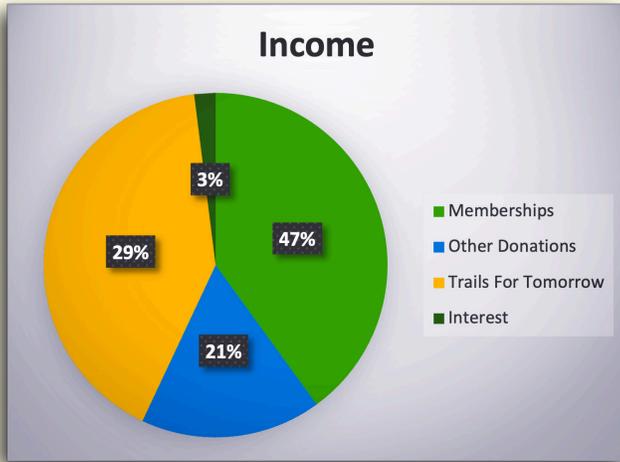
Steve Wolter
Bloomington

IPA 2025 Accomplishments

- Advocacy efforts for Indiana State Parks (INSP) and Nature Preserves (NP):
 - Testified at a public hearing, submitted written recommendations, and organized additional testimony by several local Chambers of Commerce and tourism organizations for the 2025 Natural Resources Legislative Study Committee, focused on the economic and health values of public lands.
 - Testified at legislative budget hearings regarding impacts of INSP's financial shortfall in the proposed budget.
 - Continued our partnership with the Indiana Conservation Alliance (INCA) to follow and support legislation related to natural resources conservation.
 - Supported approval of funds for rebuilding McCormick's Creek SP campground, destroyed by a tornado in 2023.
 - Endorsed the Indiana Native Plant Society's initiative to make the Indiana-native butterfly milkweed the state flower, replacing the peony.
- Supported INSP/NP Friends groups by:
 - Funding food for and participating in annual meetings for friends groups.
 - Funding the use of Nature Connect, a tool for collecting and reporting friends group volunteer hours.
 - Awarding \$9,922 in project grants to eight state park friends' groups (listed on IPA's website).
- Continued IPA's Trails for Tomorrow Initiative by:
 - Evaluating trails at eight state parks and reporting findings to INSP.
 - Funding \$4687 in wayfinding trail maps for O'Bannon Woods.
 - Approving \$17,000 in funding for wayfinding trail maps at Indiana Dunes, McCormick's Creek, Shades, Tippecanoe and Turkey Run.
- Participated in Conservation Day at the Statehouse, Earth Day events, the Indiana State Fair, the State Employee Capital Campaign information day, the Indiana Land Protection Alliance (ILPA)-DNR reception, and several other conservation partner events.
- Continued financial and volunteer support for Donaldson's Woods NP Forest Monitoring Project at Spring Mill.
- Added an Instagram page for IPA and issued four e-newsletters to IPA members.
- Added five new board members with diverse backgrounds and expertise.
- Continued a successful five-year trend of increasing memberships and donations to support IPA projects and advocacy.



IPA 2025 Financial Summary



**Scan to visit
IPA's website:**



www.indianaparksalliance.org

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instagram.com/indianaparksalliance

Watch IPA in 2026...

- New project grant awards for local DNR Friends' groups.
- Trail evaluations and more wayfinding trail signs funded and installed.
- Publication of a Donaldson Woods (Spring Mill SP) research update, funded by IPA.
- Look for IPA at Earth Day and other conservation-oriented events.
- Quarterly e-news in your inbox.
- Advocacy efforts to support funding and staff of Indiana State Parks and Nature Preserves.

...And Get Involved!

- Join IPA and help us continue to build a strong financial foundation!
- Plan for a gift to our Trails for Tomorrow campaign in the Spring of 2026.
- If you are a state employee, donate to IPA through the State Employee Capital Campaign.
- Use Goodshop or sign up to donate when you shop at Kroger.
- Contact your legislators when you see IPA action alerts, or just to let them know that state parks and nature preserves are important to you. Find contact information at iga.IN.gov.
- Volunteer to work IPA tables at festivals and events.
- Give gift memberships, recruit new members or suggest potential donors.
- Follow IPA on Facebook or on Instagram. Send us your photos of state parks and nature preserves to share on social media.



Indiana Parks Alliance

Protecting state parks & nature preserves

The Indiana Parks Alliance (IPA) is a charitable organization that supports Indiana State Parks and Nature Preserves, the resources they steward, and the people they serve.