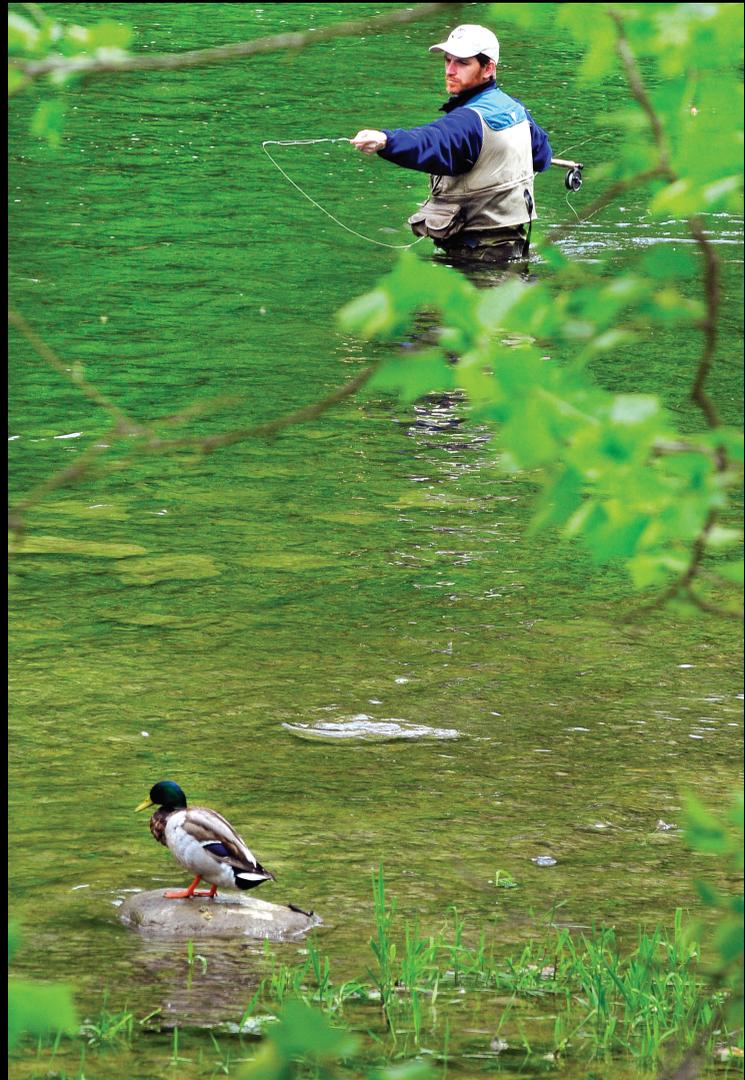


# Indiana Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan 2011-2015

*Hoosiers Planning Play*







STATE OF INDIANA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
State House, Second Floor  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.  
*Governor*

January 2012



Dear Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts:

Indiana citizens can be proud of the many strides Hoosiers have made since the last Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was published five years ago.

The 2010 launch of the Healthy Rivers Initiative, the largest conservation initiative ever undertaken in Indiana, will permanently protect 43,000 acres located in the floodplain of the Wabash River and Sugar Creek in west central Indiana and 26,000 acres of the Muscatatuck River bottomlands in southeast Indiana.

This initiative will increase public access to hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, boating, and bird watching, and leave a legacy for future generations by providing a major conservation destination for tourists. The project also will provide additional flood protection for riparian landowners.

Despite challenging fiscal times, we've forged ahead of schedule in trails development. When we embarked on the Indiana State Trails, Greenways & Bikeways Plan in 2006, our sights were set on an ambitious goal of having a trail within 7.5 miles or 15 minutes of all Hoosier residents by 2016. As of January 2012, we have achieved nearly 97 percent of that goal, and we expect to move closer as the years progress.

Reaching our targets for these programs in time for the state's bicentennial in 2016 is a worthy goal that will require more of the same kind of innovation. Following this plan will not only help make that happen in a more effective manner but also help more Hoosiers adopt a healthier and rewarding lifestyle.

Sincerely,

*Mitch Daniels*



Dear Fellow Hoosiers,

Reading and reviewing statistics about the many recreational opportunities and activities available in Indiana may not be as much fun as doing them but it is essential for those who work with the outdoors. Careful, systematic planning, research and organization is necessary if we are to continue to meet the changing needs and interests of residents and visitors all around our great state.

That is where this Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan we call "SCORP" comes in. The SCORP is compiled every five years to outline the diverse opportunities for recreation in the Hoosier state, how people can and have enjoyed them, and where they go to do them. The document also offers a peek ahead to opportunities and improvements citizens can and should expect in the next five years.

The diversity of recreational offerings around the state is no accident. In many cases, our recreational advances have come about because of strong partnerships, not only among all levels of government but also with private individuals and organizations. Many people from all different walks of life have taken valuable time to complete the surveys detailed in these pages. On behalf of every person who has ever done anything from hunting, fishing, bicycling, rowing, hiking, camping to many other activities around the state, thank you.

This handbook for outdoor recreation providers is the blueprint for applying for funds and putting them to the best use. Following this plan through the hard work of a lot of dedicated people is vital if we are to continue Indiana's well deserved reputation as a great place to enjoy natural beauty and have good, clean outdoor fun, right here at home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Robert E. Carter, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert E. Carter Jr.

# Indiana Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan 2011-2015

*HOOSIERS PLANNING PLAY*

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*JANUARY 2012*

*THE PREPARATION OF THIS PLAN WAS FINANCED IN PART THROUGH A PLANNING GRANT FROM  
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LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ACT OF 1965  
(PUBLIC LAW 88-578, AS AMENDED).*

## **SCORP PLANNING**

The Indiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) requires the expertise of people from many disciplines to be an effective tool for the state. Those who volunteer as members of the Plan Advisory Committee meet several times a year during the research and writing. They provide valuable insight and commentary that guides the development of surveys, research analysis, and creation of a plan that can be used by providers from all levels of community, including state, county, municipal, and township.

The Division of Outdoor Recreation thanks the original members of the Plan Advisory Committee for their advice, support, expertise, time, and talent. These people give direction to the SCORP 2011–2015 and ensure the priorities and contents are in line with the State's vision, mission, and goals for outdoor recreation and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

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## SCORP VISION STATEMENT

The SCORP is an information resource that quantifies and analyzes the state's outdoor recreation resources for the social, environmental, health and economic benefit of citizens statewide. The SCORP is intended to support local, regional and state-level recreation decision making, as well as foster research, partnerships and cooperation among users, planners, government officials and nonprofits.

## SCORP GOALS

- Qualify Indiana for National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state-side grants
- Set statewide priorities for funding of grants through LWCF, the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), and any other applicable funds available at state or federal levels
- Provide a quantitative analysis of outdoor recreation supply and demand statewide
- Improve the provision of outdoor recreation to all users



## LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897) was enacted “ ... to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring accessibility to all citizens of the United States of America of present and future generations and visitors who are lawfully present within the boundaries of the United States of America such quantity and quality of outdoor recreation resources as may be available and are necessary and desirable for individual active participation in such recreation and strengthen the health and vitality of the citizens of the United States by (1) providing funds for and authorizing federal assistance to the states in planning, acquisition, and development of needed land and water areas and facilities and (2) providing funds for the federal acquisition and development of certain lands and other areas.”

According to the National Park Service 2008 LWCF State Assistance Program Manual: “To be eligible for LWCF assistance for acquisition and development grants, each state shall prepare a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and update it at least once every five years.” In other words, a SCORP needs to look at outdoor recreation supply and demand; set priorities for current and future capital improvement, land acquisition, and development; and allow opportunities for citizens and local government officials to take part in the planning process.

The main objectives of the LCWF have remained the same for 46 years: land acquisition, recreation, preservation, provision, development, accessibility, and the strengthening of the health and vitality of our nation. This SCORP shows that Indiana’s focus is still directly in line with the LWCF Act of 1965.



Indiana has received more than \$83 million from the LWCF since the program's inception. Indiana's smaller entities (e.g., counties, townships, municipalities) provide outdoor recreation opportunities to their citizens through the appropriation of LWCF grant monies. Twelve projects were funded between December 2006 and December 2011. Of those, half included land acquisition (163+ acres), nine included trail development and two included the development/redevelopment of aquatic features. Facilities included in the projects were:

- Disc Golf
- Picnic Areas
- Playgrounds
- Campground
- Community garden
- 3-D archery range
- Native landscape/prairie development

LWCF requires a 50/50 match from communities that receive the grant, and is reimbursement-based (all funds for the project must be paid up-front by communities and then reimbursed upon successful project completion). As outdoor recreation providers struggle with increasing operating and maintenance costs, it is easy to see how important the LWCF is in funding acquisition projects where more outdoor recreation is needed. Unfortunately, these grants cannot fund every project in the state. Alternative funding methods will be discussed in this SCORP.





## INTRODUCTION

Publication of a new SCORP offers the chance to observe and record the many changes and new trends in Indiana and nationwide since the last SCORP and during the last decade. Many directly affect the provision of parks and recreation in Indiana. Some of these changes include: changing demographics and socio-economics; the children and nature movement; the growing statewide obesity epidemic; and the increasing importance and economic benefits of Indiana travel, tourism and outdoor recreation statewide as well as in local communities.

Searching through data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and similar sources yields the following socio-economic changes in the state:

- **More Hoosiers:** According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the state has grown in population, but not much: from 6,301,700 in 2006, to 6,483,802 in 2010.
- **Older Hoosiers:** Indiana is aging slightly; the state's median age has risen from 35.2 in 2000 to 36.4 in 2010. Among other factors, people are living longer and improvements in medical care are enabling people to survive previously debilitating accidents.
- **Baby boomers retiring:** Baby boomers (those born post-World War II, between 1946 and 1964) began turning 65 in 2011; and are retiring in increasing numbers.
- **Hoosiers earning more:** Median household income in Indiana in 1999 was \$41,567; and rose to \$47,465 in 2009.
- **Fewer living under same roof:** Average Indiana household size has fallen from 2.53 in 2000 to 2.49 in 2009.
- **More out of work:** The entire nation has weathered a recession. Indiana's January 2006 statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 5.1% rose to 9.1% by January 2011 (IN Dept. of Workforce Dev.; 2006/2011).
- **Construction and manufacturing hit hardest:** The Indiana Business Resource Center states that construction and manufacturing jobs across Indiana have been one of the job categories hardest hit by the recession, and have been slow to recover.

- **More families living in poverty:** The percentage of Indiana families living below poverty level has risen from 6.7% in 2,000 to 9.5% in 2009.
- **Paying more for fuel:** Gasoline prices in 2006 nationally were as low as \$2.20 per gallon. Prices in May 2011 reached \$4.27 per gallon in many Indiana cities. (USA TODAY 11/6/2006; Indianapolis Star 05/06/2011).

### *Recreation close to home important*

Due to the changes in the national economy, many Hoosiers have been forced to tighten their financial belts, and this has begun to affect how they recreate. During the recession, many Hoosiers have been doing "staycations." Instead of taking long, expensive trips far out of state, they're staying much closer to home in places like state and county parks, regional lakes and reservoirs, and other attractions. DNR recognized this trend by offering "Staycation" specials at Indiana State Park Inns in 2010 and 2011. As Hoosiers stay closer to home, they are using local and regional public lands and outdoor recreation sites of every type. Local museums, parks, historic sites, special events, fairs, festivals, sports events, and outdoor activities of all kinds can be an inexpensive and popular option for Hoosiers, especially in difficult economic times. Vacationing nearby has offered many Hoosier families recreation options with lower gas or travel costs, less travel stress, low or no entry fees, minimum travel time spent, and the opportunity to explore new sights and experiences.

### *Movement to re-connect children with nature*

More broadly, a nationwide movement has begun to take shape that encourages children to go outside and play and explore nature, especially in their own backyards and nearby green spaces. The "Children and Nature Movement" has many leaders, but the most recognized voice is probably that of Richard Louv, author of the book: "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" (Algonquin Books, 2008). "Last Child in the Woods" gathers a great deal of recent research that draws connections between growing nationwide childhood health

trends such as asthma, attention deficit disorders, obesity, and depression, and the technological, indoors-oriented modern society. Louv's concept of nature-deficit disorder purports that direct contact with the natural world is absolutely vital for the healthy mental and physical development of children as well as adults. Louv points out that today's children grow up in a world obsessed with technology where kids carry their own cellphones; send friends endless text messages; watch the latest videos in the family SUV; have the most popular video game consoles, cable television and DVDs at home; and research their science papers for school entirely from the Internet.

At the same time, today's parents are constantly reminded by the news media that the world has pedophiles, kidnappers, crime, environmental disasters and other threats to their children. Not only that, their homes are often in neighborhoods with strict legal covenants prohibiting child-constructed forts or tree houses, or even home-built play structures.

Louv says sedentary inside play has become more common and easier, and is perceived as safer for today's children. The result is disconnection from nature and the outdoors. As Louv states in the book: "Yet, at the very moment that the bond is breaking between the young and the natural world, a growing body of research links our mental, physical, and spiritual health directly to our association with nature—in positive ways. Several of these studies suggest that thoughtful exposure of youngsters to nature can even be a powerful form of therapy for attention-deficit disorders and other maladies. As one scientist puts it, we can now assume that just as children need good nutrition and adequate sleep, they may very well need contact with nature. Reducing that deficit—healing the broken bond between our young and nature—is in our self-interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demands it, but also because our mental, physical, and spiritual health depends upon it. The health of the earth is at stake as well. How the young respond to nature, and how they raise their own children, will shape the configurations and conditions of our cities, homes—our daily lives." (Algonquin Books, 2008) The movement has even found supporters in the US Congress, as in July of 2011, a bipartisan group of Senators introduced the "No

Child Left Inside Act of 2011." The Act provides incentives to states to implement environmental literacy programs that support hands-on outdoor learning activities at schools, nature centers, and other outdoor education sites as well as additional professional development for teachers.

### **Indiana's obesity epidemic**

One change observed in Indiana in recent years is recognition of the growing statewide obesity epidemic. According to the 2009 U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), the world's largest ongoing telephone public health survey, nearly one third (29.9%) of Hoosiers are obese (have a body mass index of 30 or greater), and this percentage places Indiana as one of the most overweight states in the nation. The CDC reports that the associated economic impact of the nationwide obesity epidemic exceeds \$147 billion (in 2008 dollars). According to a recent CDC online article:

"Why is this epidemic happening?"

- Weight gain occurs when people eat too much food and get too little physical activity.
- Societal and community changes have accompanied the rise in obesity.
- People eat differently:
  - Some Americans have less access to stores and markets that provide healthy, affordable food such as fruits and vegetables, especially in rural, minority and lower-income neighborhoods. Restaurants, snack shops, and vending machines provide food that is often higher in calories and fat than food made at home.
  - There is too much sugar in our diet. Six out of 10 adults drink at least 1 sugary drink per day.
  - It is often easier and cheaper to get less healthy foods and beverages.
  - Foods high in sugar, fat, and salt are highly advertised and marketed.
- Many communities are built in ways that make it difficult or unsafe to be physically active:
  - Access to parks and recreation centers may be difficult or lacking and public transportation may not be available.

- Safe routes for walking or biking to school, work, or play may not exist.
- Too few students get quality, daily physical education in school.”

U.S. CDC; August 3, 2010; “Vital Signs: Latest Findings; Adult Obesity”; [cdc.gov/VitalSigns/AdultObesity/LatestFindings.html](http://cdc.gov/VitalSigns/AdultObesity/LatestFindings.html)

The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) has recognized the impact and importance of the statewide obesity epidemic and has responded with a special “Indiana Healthy Weight Initiative” that was formed using public health officials, school officials, urban planners, parks and recreation professionals, child advocates, concerned citizens and professionals from many fields in 2008. The Initiative first launched a task force whose main job was assisting ISDH staff in creating the inaugural “Indiana’s Comprehensive Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan, 2010-2020.” The Plan includes objectives that “... address improving the policies, environments, and systems that can positively influence nutrition and physical activity. The Plan organizes the objectives based on the setting they affect—child care settings, schools, health care facilities, worksites, faith-based settings, and communities, with special sections related to older adults and breast-feeding. As a whole, the objectives seek to increase access and awareness and to change policies and environments to support the occurrence of healthier behaviors.” (ISDH, 2010) The plan does a great deal to support the growing awareness across Indiana of the connections between public access to parks and recreation facilities and public health.

### ***Indiana’s economy affecting recreation***

The recent economic recession has pointed out how Indiana’s economic structure is changing. Many communities statewide that once relied on long-established manufacturing jobs have witnessed plant closures, employee layoffs, and other economic losses related to the nation’s economic hard times. Dr. Jerry Conover of Indiana University’s Indiana Business Research Center published his “Indiana’s Outlook for 2011” white paper in fall 2010. The paper said: “Some sectors are faring better than others in this recovery. Private education/health services jobs actually increased nearly 4%, and government jobs have

not slipped into negative territory. In contrast, the construction and manufacturing sectors together shed more than 138,000 jobs, nearly one-fifth of their start-of-recession levels before they started slowly rebounding. Manufacturing has inched upward slowly, but construction remains near the bottom.” (IBRC, 2010)

These changes in the Indiana economy have greatly increased the importance of non-industrial/manufacturing jobs such as those involving travel and tourism to the state’s overall economic health. Many Hoosiers may not realize it, but in 2009, the “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” industry in Indiana contributed \$2.85 billion to the state’s domestic product (IBRC-STATS Indiana; 2011). An independent 2006 economic impact study in 2006 found that travelers in Indiana spent more than \$10.36 billion on things like lodging, restaurants, transportation, entertainment and shopping (Garulski, 2006). According to the study, traveler spending supported 257,785 jobs and \$6.74 billion in wages in 2006 as well. Another economic impact from these travelers is federal, state, and local tax revenues in 2006 that totaled \$2.69 billion; tax money that did not have to come from property taxes paid by residents. According to the survey, 95% of total visitor spending came from domestic travelers; 5 percent came from international sources.

Anecdotal comments from park professionals across Indiana in local parks and recreation master plans reviewed by the DNR Division of Outdoor Recreation staff indicate that local and regional park use is on the rise, even with the weak economy. There is support for this perception from the national level: according to a 2009 study by the non-profit Trust for Public Land, members of the public (both park users and non-users) were asked: “During this period of economic difficulty, have you and your family changed how much you make use of public parks and playgrounds?” 62% stated that they use public parks and playgrounds the same or more than they did when the economy was still strong. But when park users only were asked that same question, over 93% said that they used public parks and playgrounds the same amount or more. (TPL; 2009).

Considering the significant economic impact of Indiana public parks and recreation, and the still growing use of our recreation lands, it is

reasonable to ask ourselves if there are other reasons for conserving open space as a state. Most people can agree that having good quality parks and recreation sites and facilities improve the quality of life in a community, but does it really affect a community's economics by attracting businesses? According to Texas A & M University researcher Dr. John Crompton: "...quality of life is not only important in relocation, expansion, or initiation decisions, it is also important in employee retention and has an economic bottom line...If a community commits to a long-term, comprehensive plan to enhance the factors that it can control that positively influence quality of life, it is likely to have an advantage over other places when recruiting and retaining business." (NRPA; 2005) A 2009 Trust for Public Land research paper listed the following additional economic benefits of investment in the conservation of parks and open space:

- Parks boost land values and property taxes
  - Proximity to public parks and recreation space has increased values of both residential and commercial real estate properties in multiple studies.
- Parks boost local economies by attracting businesses and residents
  - Many businesses state that quality of life factors including parks and recreation opportunities are a primary determinant of where they will relocate or start a new business.
  - With the "Baby Boomer" generation reaching retirement age, excellent quality of life amenities make certain communities more attractive than others.
- Good parks encourage economic development
  - Urban parks generate tourist dollars (just ask the organizers of special events at Indianapolis' White River State Park or Madison's Regatta).
  - Regional, State, and National Parks, Forests, and Refuges benefit surrounding areas with job growth, population increases and tourism dollars
  - Additional revenue comes from local and tourist spending on recreational products, services and industries.
- Conservation is a money saving alternative

to some development

- Conserved land is land that does not get covered with uncontrolled urban sprawl; low-density sprawl is expensive, and often costs more to provide services for than it brings in with taxes.
- Farms, ranches and forests are the lands most often developed. These lands normally bring in far more in tax revenues than they cost in community services.
- Easements can be used to preserve the viewsheds, watersheds, stream corridors, and wildlife habitat located on working lands without losing the economic activity that is already taking place there.
- Designing subdivisions as higher density sites with more houses on less land with the remaining land conserved as permanent greenspace can provide significant savings on site grading costs, shorter roadways, sidewalks, water mains, utility lines, etc.
- Conserving floodplains and stream corridors stops development from taking place where it can be destroyed or damaged by floods. Levees, dams, reservoirs and other flood control measures to protect developed floodplain land are very expensive when compared to simply leaving it to perform its natural function.
- Preserve the value of ecosystem services
  - Conserved land can be used to protect vital drinking-water supplies from contamination and pollution from development.
  - Urban parks and other conserved watersheds reduce the need for stormwater treatment by absorbing rainfall and otherwise filtering out pollution from contaminated runoff.
  - Trees take up air pollution and release oxygen daily, and also provide carbon sequestration over the long term, reducing the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air (A major contributor to global warming).
  - Trees also mitigate the "urban heat island effect" by providing shade and greatly reduced heat retention/



- absorption in cities, versus concrete, steel and asphalt.
- Parks reduce health care costs from obesity, stress, and disease
  - Many studies indicate that close proximity to parks promotes exercise, which in turn combats obesity, stress and chronic diseases such as diabetes.
  - Greenways and trails provide sustainable human-powered transportation alternatives, which decrease automotive traffic congestion, provide exercise, and increase a sense of community connectivity and place.

(Gies/TPL; 2009)

IDNR and the Division of Outdoor Recreation have created this SCORP as a way to share research and other information with all state residents, park professionals, park board members, urban planners, government officials and many more. We have a strong tradition of blending both public opinion and input from parks and recreation professionals in the field to give us the best possible understanding of current and future recreational needs and preferences statewide. The following section of this chapter contains the priorities that have emerged from all the collected data and analysis from this SCORP.

### **OUTDOOR RECREATION PRIORITIES FOR PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATION PROVIDERS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

Based on the data contained in this SCORP, the following goals and objectives are recommended to guide decision-making in parks and recreation and natural resource management for the next five years. (The following goals are presented in random order, not in order of importance.)

1. Develop more trails and bicycle/pedestrian facilities
  - a. Whenever possible, acquire rights-of-way and railroad corridors for future trail development from willing sellers
  - b. Utilize trails and bike/ped facilities as means to connect and improve existing and future outdoor recreation facilities
  - c. Integrate bike/ped facilities into long-term planning of community infrastructure design and construction whenever possible
2. Protect and enhance Indiana’s natural and outdoor recreation resources
  - a. Protect Indiana’s natural heritage by identifying and preserving significant natural areas, including wildlife/fish habitats for endangered, rare, threatened, or species of special concern
  - b. Protect Indiana’s outdoor recreation potential by identifying and preserving areas with existing or potential outdoor recreation opportunities or access
  - c. Provide for education of the citizens of Indiana in environmental stewardship and wise use of Indiana’s natural resources
  - d. Consider the improvements possible in water and air quality, brownfields, tourism and commerce created by enhancing outdoor recreation
  - e. Use “green” or sustainable designs, materials and energy sources in facility development, such as: recycled materials, alternative/renewable energy sources (solar active and passive, wind, hydroelectric), and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building certifications/very energy efficient designs
  - f. Consider the 2011 SCORP Participation Study top five “favorite” outdoor recreation activities when considering parks and recreation user preferences: Walking, Hiking, Jogging, Running, Camping, Picnicking, Fishing, Swimming
3. Encourage and promote outdoor recreation participation
  - a. Use outdoor recreation as a tool to fight the growing obesity epidemic by offering locations to participate in many kinds of healthy exercise and facilitating lifestyle change encouraging healthy living
  - b. Encourage continued acquisition and development of new outdoor recreation facilities, especially in areas of expanding population growth or high user demand
4. Encourage development of trail facilities of all kinds for bike/pedestrian use; urban, rural, long-distance, commuter, recreational, exercise/wellness, etc.
5. Require accessible, sustainable design and surfacing for trail development

- c. Encourage acquisition and development of more outdoor recreation facilities that meet local needs close-to-home, preferably within walking or biking distance of residential areas, schools, retail areas, etc.
- d. Provide for outdoor recreation opportunities for all user demographics, including all ages, abilities and skill levels
- 4. Provide funding for outdoor recreation development at the state and local level
  - a. Explore alternative funding methods such as public/private partnerships, tax increment financing (TIF), cooperative agreements, cost sharing, corporate sponsorships, etc.
  - b. Continue to administer state-level grant programs such as Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants, Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants, Wabash River Heritage Corridor Fund grants and Indiana Shooting Range grants.
  - c. Emphasize parks and recreation facilities that are cost-efficient and financially self-supporting while promoting financially affordable access to the greatest number of users possible
- d. Consider the benefits of parks and recreation toward community economic development, tourism, job growth, urban and rural revitalization, reduction of health care costs and improving quality of life
- e. Use existing financial resources as efficiently and effectively as possible; consider strategies such as privatization of services, maintenance or construction, and other means to control the costs of operations and maintenance
- 5. Continue emphasis on Indiana's aquatic resources, both natural and man-made
  - a. Preserve and protect wetlands and riparian corridors when and wherever possible through acquisition, education, funding, and development of new areas
  - b. Encourage actions that improve the quality of Indiana's waters as well as user access to aquatic recreation resources
  - c. Provide or enhance access to man-made aquatic resources whenever possible, such as splashpads, pools, water features, wetlands, ponds, lakes, access/launch sites, etc.

