

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D . . .

. . . was established in 1994 by local citizens in DeKalb, Elkhart, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, and Whitley Counties who were interested in bringing people together to identify needs, find solutions, and foster opportunities in the environmental, economic, and social areas of northeast Indiana.

This group of volunteers provides direction and leadership in identifying and addressing the area's potential. The Council serves as a vehicle, driven toward local success with the direction taken dependent upon public input, which provides the focus of our commitment. There is extra care taken to facilitate, complement, and accelerate problem solving. We help provide both the structure and the process for addressing issues by identifying the need, agreeing on a plan of action, securing the resources, implementing the plan, and evaluating the results.

It is the Council's belief that better and more far-reaching solutions can be achieved with cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. This written plan is designed to benefit the multi-county area with identified issues and opportunities to achieve realistic goals. This "living" document is revised as the needs of the rural communities change. Another document, the Annual Work Plan, details specific actions to address these goals and objectives.

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D's uniqueness lies in its ability to champion local issues that are not being addressed by others. Emphasis is placed on bringing a diverse group of volunteers together, building consensus, and minimizing duplication among multi-county partners. This Long Range Area Plan identifies four priority areas and how we can make things happen.

Overview of the Area

Geographic:

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D lies in the northeast corner of Indiana, consisting of six northeast Indiana counties (DeKalb, Elkhart, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, and Whitley) with a total area of 1,471,291 acres – just over 6% of land area of the state of Indiana.

The area maintains its rural character with a tranquil landscape – lakes, rivers, wetlands, wildlife, farm markets, orchards, farms, timber, livestock, local festivals, historic buildings and bridges, and state and local nature preserves are part of the heart of this six-county area. Small towns and country roads connect people to each other and provide gateways to the open space and beauty all around.

Natural Resource:

The area is the headwaters of the Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, and Ohio River Basin watersheds. Groundwater is provided by hundreds of bodies of water within the sand, gravel, and limestone depths, supplying virtually 100% of the area's water supply.

Water resources include nearly 300 natural lakes covering more than 16,000 acres, six major rivers, and 132,000-plus acres of wetlands. This area is home to a variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, mollusks, and plants.

On the better drained soils, a predominance of hardwood trees grow. The commercial hardwoods include ash and cottonwood; maple, beech and birch; oak and hickory; and black walnut and tulip trees. The value of woodlands goes beyond forestry, to include recreation, wildlife habitats, and watershed protection.

Glaciers and meltwaters deposited soils in the area, resulting in over 881,000 acres (83%) of prime agricultural land.

Agriculture:

70% of the area is agricultural, with more than 1 million acres of farmland. Over 11% of the farms in Indiana are located in this six-county area. Agriculture is a key part of northeast Indiana's economy.

Combination cash-grain and livestock farms dominate the area. Corn, soybeans, hay, and wheat are the major crops grown, with cattle, hogs, turkeys, chickens, and ducks representing the top livestock production.

The area also boasts some unique agricultural-derived products such as bison, deer, elk, llamas, mules, donkeys, burros, geese, quail, pheasants, popcorn, tomatoes, peppermint, spearmint, cantaloupe, watermelon, snap beans, blueberries, cucumbers, eggs, and ice cream.

Demographic:

Rural population in the area accounts for 60% of the total population. Federal highways carry traffic 325 miles, with state roads connecting another 650 miles. Many roads are equipped with extra wide shoulders to accommodate the horse and buggy traffic of one of the largest concentrations of Amish in the US.

Socioeconomic:

The area makes up just over 6% of the total population of Indiana. While agriculture and agriculture-related services employ a large number of people in the area, manufacturing employs nearly 38% of the population. Service industries, retail, construction, health care and social services, professional and technical services, farming, warehousing, entertainment, recreation, wholesale trading, and information services employ the remainder of the area's population.

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, or family status. (02.09)



155 Lane 101 West Otter Lake
Angola, IN 46703

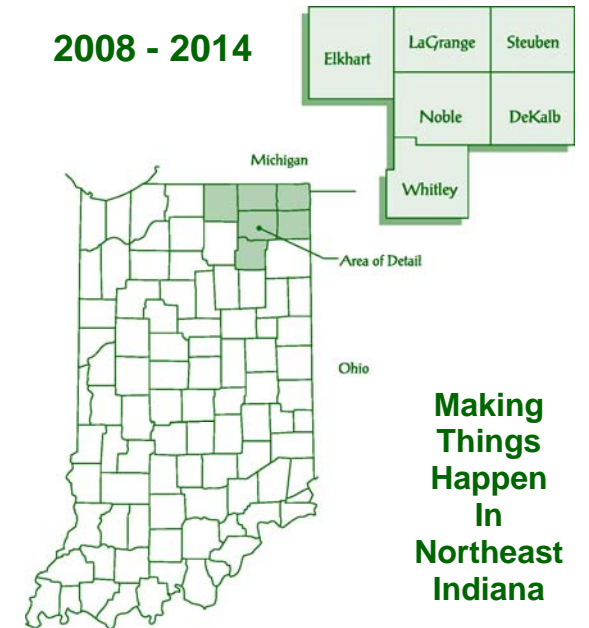
Phone: (260) 665-7723

Email: office@wood-land-lakes.org

Website: www.wood-land-lakes.org

Long Range Area Plan

2008 - 2014



Our Mission

Volunteers working together for responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

Our Vision

That awareness, education and wise-use will conserve and improve the future quality of our air, water, land, woods, plants, and wildlife. The combined efforts of volunteers and community support will serve as a catalyst to provide local solutions to natural resource problems in northeast Indiana.

Land Conservation

Local public input stressed concerns for the environment as among the highest priorities. Northeast Indiana is predominantly agricultural, with an abundance of natural lakes, rivers, and streams. Local citizens are increasingly aware of sediment and erosion.

Opportunities abound to bring landowners, outdoor enthusiasts, and public officials together to identify and achieve common goals.

Goal 1

Promote 10 opportunities for local people to learn about Best Management Practices (BMP).

Objective 1.1

Educate 5 locally-driven groups on BMP's.

Objective 1.2

Promote 10 activities to create an awareness of BMP's.

Goal 2

Promote 5 opportunities for local people to plan and utilize Best Management Practices (BMP).

Objective 2.1

Cultivate 2 volunteers for input in the Lake Michigan, St. Joseph River Watershed & Implementation Plan.

Objective 2.2

Collaborate with the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative to develop a watershed plan in the Lake Erie, St. Joseph River Watershed.

Goal 3

Research and promote 2 financial resources to fund Best Management Practices (BMP).

Objective 3.1

Develop a list of 10 potential funding sources from organizations who promote BMP's and work with non-profits.

Water Management

Urban and rural citizens alike cite the concern to improve water quality. There is a need to bring people to the table in order to open doors leading to improved water conservation and management.

Opportunities exist for us to serve as an impartial, third-party to build multi-county efforts.

Goal 4

Collaborate with 2 regional water quality groups addressing water management issues.

Objective 4.1

Identify 3 Elkhart River sub-watershed groups to work with the Lake Michigan, St. Joseph River Watershed group.

Goal 5

Collaborate with 2 local water quality groups addressing water management of a local landfill in area watersheds.

Objective 5.1

Address leachate runoff from a local landfill.

Goal 6

Promote 5 opportunities for local people to learn about water management.

Objective 6.1

Promote 3 educational opportunities addressing water management issues.



Community Development

Communities struggle to maintain the rural character of northeast Indiana. Citizens want to sharpen their leadership skills in local settings - people who are capable of addressing rural issues, impacting rural residents.

Opportunities exist to promote leadership development, provide organizational structure, and promote partnerships.

Goal 7

Expand rural community development by matching 6 volunteers with leadership roles.

Objective 7.1

Present 4 opportunities for volunteers to be trained and experience leadership roles.

Goal 8

Expand rural community development by matching 50 volunteers with active, involved roles in the area.

Objective 8.1

Empower 30 citizens to address local natural resource concerns.

Goal 9

Promote and support rural community development by pursuing 5 opportunities to grow agribusiness or agritourism.

Objective 9.1

Address and partner in 5 unique community development projects.

Goal 10

Identify 5 opportunities for the sustainability of the Council as a viable resource to rural community development.

Objective 10.1

Explore 2 self-assessment tools for the Council and Committees.

Objective 10.2

Publicize and promote 20 Council activities and projects.

Land Management

There is a growing trend of more people moving to rural areas. The country lifestyle attracts people who want fresh air and open spaces, with less traffic and crime. More homes and developments are being built in rural areas. A balance between rural, lake community, suburban, and urban people and places needs to be addressed.

Opportunities exist to capitalize on changing conditions, broaden outreach, and further share the natural resources.

Goal 11

Protect 10 farms from industrial, commercial, and residential development.

Objective 11.1

Promote the protection of agriculture, wetlands, woodlands, pastureland, and wildlife habitat on 500 acres of land.

Goal 12

Seek 5 opportunities to promote wise land-use to create a balance between the needs of local people and the health and well-being of the natural resources.

Objective 12.1

Work with 3 counties and their comprehensive master plans.

Objective 12.2

Encourage 3 diverse groups to work together to provide healthy, locally grown and harvested food to 20,000 underserved people.

Objective 12.3

Promote 10 educational opportunities for people to learn about the benefit of woodland management.

Objective 12.4

Identify 5 renewable energy sources accessible within the area.