

## **INDIANA FOREST ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021**

### **Our Vision:**

Through expert research, influential advocacy, effective organizing, powerful storytelling, and when necessary, litigation, the Indiana Forest Alliance will ensure that the integrity of Indiana's forest ecosystem thrives as a natural resource to benefit native wildlife, soil, air and water quality; and as the emblem of our natural heritage. By leading a coalition of citizens, organizations and decision makers, IFA will establish, protect, and restore forests for future generations.

### **Our Mission:**

To preserve and restore Indiana's native hardwood forest ecosystem for the enjoyment of all.

### **Who We Are:**

IFA is a non-profit, statewide organization of individuals dedicated to the long-term health and well-being of Indiana's native forests. We are volunteers and full-time staff working to protect and restore Indiana's forests.

### **Who We Serve:**

The IFA serves citizens, organizations, landowners and communities with a wide range of interests in Indiana's forests. We provide accurate information to the people of Indiana to involve them in efforts to protect Indiana's forests and ensure their opportunities for input into decision-making that affects forests. We speak out for the native animals, plants and other creatures who survive in Indiana's forests and cannot speak for themselves.

### **IFA accomplishes its mission in 5 ways:**

1. By utilizing and collaborating with experts and researchers from leading universities and other institutions to document the value of preserving the natural diversity of forests in Indiana.
2. By effectively advocating before the Indiana general assembly, federal, state and local agencies.
3. By reaching out, educating and organizing individuals and groups who share our passion for protecting forests in Indiana.
4. By humanizing the forest issues, articulating the importance and benefits of people being in nature, telling stories about citizens impacted, and leveraging the power of images.
5. By seeking judicial relief, if appropriate, when all other options have been exhausted.

## **Our Goals: 2017-2021**

1. Expand and protect old growth forests on public land.
2. Establish the value of old growth forests through the Ecoblitz and other natural science-based and economic research.
3. Restore and protect significant forest tracts throughout the state and advocate for the establishment of significant portions of wild areas in north and central Indiana that contribute to a north-south corridor of contiguous forest land.
4. Continue to build strength of IFA as an organization.

## **Background and Context**

The IFA was established in 1996 as an initiative by Heartwood to create a network of individuals and organizations working to protect the forests of Indiana and restore the state's forest ecosystem. In the aftermath of a decade long fight over the Hoosier National Forest (HNF) with concerns growing over many other environmental issues, Indiana's environmental community wanted to ensure there would be an organization that would tirelessly continue to advocate for the protection of Indiana's forests. The initial objective of IFA was to continue efforts toward protecting the HNF with an added emphasis on protecting the numerous state forests as well as concerns for the health of private forests.

The woods of Indiana once comprised the heart of the largest and most diverse temperate hardwood forest on the planet. By some estimates the biodiversity of Indiana forests exceeds that of the Amazon rainforest. These forests were virtually wiped out within a century after America gained its independence, as waves of European immigrants cleared the land for agriculture and then industrial development. Some 19.5 million acres of forests in Indiana were reduced to 1.5 million acres. During the twentieth century nearly a quarter of Indiana's originally forested area slowly grew back, much of it in the southern third of the state where land had been abandoned after being exhausted and eroded through unsuitable farming. Although some of the forested land is on its way to recovery, today Indiana's forests remain under grave threat.

IFA is dedicated to uniting and mobilizing individuals and organizations throughout Indiana who want to restore significant remnants of the state's precious hardwood forest in all of Indiana's natural physiographic regions. We believe that the restoration of this forest is vital to conserving our biological heritage and allowing it to flourish. This is particularly urgent during this time of rapid and alarming mass extinction of species. Such restoration will also provide an effective strategy for sequestering carbon to combat climate change while sustaining a productive wood products industry on private woodland, protecting water supplies, and enhancing Hoosiers' quality of life for generations to come. Indiana's public forests belong to its citizens, who have the right to enjoy their full recreational potential.

Unfortunately, due to management strategies by the Division of Forestry (DOF) within the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Indiana's state forests are under an unprecedented assault from commercial logging that has increased on average by more than 400 percent since 2004, and as much as 1,000 percent when comparing individual years (2002 vs. 2012). In fact, at the current rate of logging and its attendant road building, there will be no areas left within 95% of Indiana's state forests fifteen years from today that are not being continuously logged for commercial purposes. IFA believes this emphasis on logging wrongly places the production of saw timber from these public forests above all other values. Such management is unauthorized by state law, needlessly destroying Indiana's wild heritage, and degrading Hoosiers' quality of life.

## **IFA Goals: 2017-2021**

### **Goal 1: Expand and protect old growth forests on public land.**

#### ***Strategies:***

- a) Advocate for the continued protection of publicly owned forests by statutorily setting aside acreage, including "Wild Areas" legislation proposed by IFA, from commercial logging sufficient to allow for dispersed wilderness recreation, and the protection of native flora and fauna.
- b) Advocate for the reduction of commercial logging in Indiana's state forest system to pre-2005 levels.
- c) Maintain currently unlogged areas of the Hoosier National Forest, reduce the use of clear-cutting, and seek federal wilderness protection for additional areas within HNF.
- d) Increase the participation in these advocacy efforts to at least 5,000 individuals and thirty (30) organizations who support the establishment of Wild Areas in the state forests and federal wilderness in the Hoosier National Forest such as the Indiana Audubon Society, Sassafras Audubon Society, Amos W. Butler Audubon Society, INBIRD (Indiana Birding), Hoosier Chapter Sierra Club, Hoosier Herpetological Society, Hoosier Mushroom Society, Indianapolis Hiking Club and other groups by:
  - Giving presentations to the organizations noted above.
  - Holding Summits to develop collective strategies to establish these protected areas.
  - Recruiting organizations to be stewards of the 13 Wild Areas proposed by IFA.

- Engaging national organizations in collaborative initiatives.
- e) Seek increased funding for the acquisition of additional state and federal public forestland.
  - f) Oppose public works projects that destroy Indiana interior forests.

**Goal 2: Establish the value of old growth forests through the Ecoblitz and other natural science-based and economic research.**

***Strategies:***

- a) Expand science-based research currently underway by the researchers from Indiana-based colleges and universities in the proposed Low-Gap Wild Area, into (1) additional proposed State Wild Area, and one (1) area in the Hoosier National Forest
- b) Support studies of the economic viability of the commercial logging in our state forests and alternative means for generating public funds to manage our state forests.
- c) Engage academic institutions and researchers to publish findings from the research done in the proposed Wild Areas.
- d) Add a Ph.D. forest ecologist / biologist to the IFA staff.
- e) Distribute the results of the findings of IFA's work through the IFA website, social, print, and media organizations, and through presentations, to raise public awareness.

**Goal 3: Restore and protect significant forest tracts throughout the state and advocate for the establishment of significant wild areas in north and central Indiana and the eventual creation of a north-south corridor of contiguous forest land across the state.**

Through collaboration with a variety of environmental, outdoor recreation, planning, and greenway organizations, and local government units, advocate for the creation of a contiguous forest corridor from the Ohio River to Lake Michigan through riparian drainage basins connecting appropriate contiguous public lands in southern and south-central Indiana to the Lake Michigan shore.

***Strategies:***

- a) Advocate for the creation of the Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge.
- b) Actively support the creation of the Mounds Greenway.

- c) Organize initiatives to protect high value conservation forests such as the old growth forest at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis.
- d) Propose the extension of the Knobstone Trail through the Hoosier National Forest and across the White, Wabash and Kankakee River basins to the Indiana Dunes National Lake Shore involving a patchwork of existing and expanded river corridor trails, state parks, wildlife refuges, county parks, conservation easements, land protected by land trusts, and willing private land owners.
- e) Illustrate the possibility of these proposed corridors and trails with a powerful, positive 'What If' campaign.

**Goal 4: Strengthen IFA as an organization.**

IFA will build and strengthen itself as an organization by increasing membership and sponsorships by at least 20% each year, participating in the legislative process and scientific research, hosting forums and special events, participating in public festivals, securing grants, and solicitation of funds from individual donors.

**Strategies:**

- a) Increase membership by 20% each year from 2017 to 2021.
- b) Increase the necessary citizen participation with state and federal elected officials and the Governor's office to secure enactment of legislation creating Wild Areas in the state forests, subsequent state rulemaking, and federal wilderness legislation for the Hoosier National Forest.
- c) Diversify IFA funding sources, limiting its dependence on foundation support to special projects, while increasing funding for general operating expense through special events, more members, individual donors, on-line giving, planned giving, and other means.
- d) Elevate and maintain IFA's image and credibility as the Indiana forest conservation organization through creative and consistent branding strategies, including a strategic approach to marketing-related expenditures, a storytelling approach showcasing people and how they are impacted by forest issues, and smart use of available engagement data to understand and expand our audience.
- e) Develop a tactical, yet fun, citizen activists training program to teach more people how to become activists and communicate our mission.
- f) Build a strong board of directors that effectively expands the geographic base of IFA's leadership and strengthens IFA's fundraising and oversight abilities

by identifying and implementing steps necessary to retain existing board members and recruit and train future new board members.

## **About IFA's Strategic Planning Process**

IFA's strategic planning process began in March, 2016 at a two-day board and staff retreat. A discussion of IFA's past successes and shortcomings, followed by a broad discussion of goals for the next 5 years, occurred among board and staff members. A four-person committee was appointed to immediately begin drafting a strategic plan, based upon goals and priorities established during the retreat. The committee met 3 times and communicated by phone and electronically during the interim period between IFA Board meetings to produce this draft five-year strategic plan for consideration and preliminary adoption at the August 20, 2016 IFA Board Meeting and final adoption at the IFA Annual Member Meeting on October 15, 2016.

## **Strategic Planning Committee Members**

Angelo Datillo, *IFA Board Member*

David Haberman, *IFA Board Member*

Mary Kay Rothert, *IFA Board Member and Secretary*

Paul Bryan, *IFA Staff*