

VIGO COUNTY  
PARKS & RECREATION  
MASTER PLAN





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The completion of the 2020-2024 Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan was a combined effort of many people and organizations. The planning team would like to sincerely thank the following groups for their attention and effort:

**VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT STAFF**

**VIGO COUNTY PARKS BOARD**

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

**COLLABORATIVE TRAINING NETWORK**



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## VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT 2020-2024 MASTER PLAN SUMMARY

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### **WELCOME TO VIGO COUNTY, INDIANA!**

Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department is a key provider of natural spaces, recreational opportunities, and educational programming for the county. The nearly 2,700 acres of versatile parkland managed by the department is valued by its community and appreciated by its users. The Vigo parks system is dedicated to passive and active recreational areas where families and individuals can recreate through hiking, camping, playing, fishing, boating, biking, wildlife viewing, learning, and so much more. Vigo County public parkland currently encompasses a unique combination of open space, forests, prairies, lakes, wetlands, historical sites, and community parks.

A comprehensive parks and recreation master plan sets forth a five-year strategy that is challenging yet achievable. In the past decade, the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department has seen nominal annual budget increases and has undergone tremendous growth, acquiring hundreds of acres, without having significant staff growth and expanding community programming. With nearly complete administrative turnover in the past year, the department has made incredible strides in bolstering a culture of productivity and hard work. The Vigo County Parks and Recreation staff are dedicated to maintaining and enjoying the beautiful parkland they call home.

The 2020-2024 Master Plan provides an appropriate road map for the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department to implement the expressed wants and needs of the public with a sound understanding of the milestones required to achieve success, through industry best practices, preparing the department to achieve excellence and best serve the citizens of Vigo County.

# MASTER PLANNING PROCESS & TIMELINE

The 2020-2024 master planning process began in early 2019 with updating the previous 5-year master plan, developing the community survey, and conducting a staff evaluation under new leadership. In August of 2019, the master plan contracting agency, Collaborative Training Network, was hired to analyze the public engagement data,

facilitate stakeholder meetings, and write the plan.

The planning process for the 2020-2024 Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan has several components, identified here:

## MASTER PLAN PROCESS & TIMELINE

May–Aug 2019 Research and Analysis	Aug–Oct 2019 Public Engagement	Oct–Nov 2019 Needs Analysis & Action Plan	Dec 2019–Jan 2020 Public Presentation of Master Plan	Feb–April 2020 Master Plan Adoption
Survey development  Review of existing assets and programming	Meetings with community members, stakeholders, department staff  Community survey	Analyze and summarize data  Determine themes, goals, & specific strategic actions.	Draft presentation to the Vigo Parks Board  Public comment period	Adopted by Vigo Parks Board  Accepted by Indiana Department of Natural Resources

## DEFINITION OF PLANNING AREA

The planning area for Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department is defined as any public parkland located within Vigo County limits that is not owned, maintained, or managed by other public entities. Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department planning area serves all citizens of Vigo County, as well as visitors to the county.

Vigo County is centrally located along the western border of the State of Indiana along the Wabash River.

The largest incorporated settlement within Vigo County, Terre Haute, has a population of almost 60,000 and covers all of Harrison Township and extends into several surrounding townships. West Terre Haute, as its name indicates, lies to the west, along U.S. Route 40; it has a population of about 2,300. The town of Seelyville lies to the east of Terre Haute, also along U.S. Route 40, with a population of about 1,200.



## PURPOSE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

- To create a practical, measurable set of actions for the upcoming five years, informed by the community, parks board and the department
- To provide an accurate representation of the current state of the Vigo County parks system
- To seek public input through several methods of data and information collection
- To develop a comprehensive needs analysis using public input
- To ensure that recreational facilities, amenities, and programs provided are accessible
- To submit the 2020-2024 Vigo County Parks and Recreation Master Plan to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Outdoor Recreation, by April 15, 2020
- To receive approval from Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Outdoor Recreation, to be eligible for state and federal grants administered through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources

During a time of system growth, resources dedicated to designing and installing new assets reduced resources for maintaining and programming the parks department's current assets. Through comprehensive public engagement and staff discussion, the department is moving toward a time of maintaining and improving its unique assets and raising awareness of what the parks department has to offer. The three themes of the master plan that emerged from community engagement and assessment of the parks system helped shape the plan and decision making moving forward. The goals related to each theme are informed and can be measured by achieving the strategic actions laid out in the Action Schedule of this master plan (See Part III: The Plan).

**THE THEMES FOR THE 2020-2024 VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT MASTER PLAN:**  
Improvements and Maintenance of Assets  
Community-Driven Programming  
Staffing and Operations Management

### IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS

**GOAL:** Ensure that existing and future infrastructure is efficiently managed and maintained.

- Strategic actions related to this theme focus on infrastructure and species management for the purpose of enhancing beauty and cultivating a healthy, safe environment for patrons, wildlife, and parkland vegetation.

### COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

**GOAL:** Create, maintain, and advertise responsive programming for the Vigo County community.

- Strategic actions related to this theme focus on creating and implementing nature-based recreational programming and special events that bring heightened awareness of department services and amenities to users and nonusers alike.

### STAFFING AND OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

**GOAL:** Improve organizational capacity through thoughtful leadership and planning for improved operations.

- Strategic actions related to this theme focus on "the people" side of parks and recreation – utilizing the skills and team characteristics of department staff to become more efficient, more resilient, and have fun doing a job that offers incredible programming and amenities to Vigo County.

**The master plan themes, goals, and action items echo the voices of the Vigo community.**



## IN THE WORDS OF VIGO COUNTY COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

The community would like to see **MORE WALKING TRAILS/PATHS.**

*Which aligns with the activities they do most in the parks:*

Walking for pleasure

Cycling for pleasure

Hiking and backpacking

Nature walks

“Please continue improvement of current parks and lands for trails and nature walks. Any money needed to purchase new land that can be used for nature walks and or trail use would be beneficial. Thanks for all you do in making your parks a desirous place to spend our limited family time in nature.”

“Continue to develop Dewey Point. More improvements at Bi-Centennial Park. Better trail connections.”

“Love the trails. Would love to see more. Keep up the great work. I understand budgeting is an issue. You do great with what you are allocated. Griffin Bike Park has been an excellent addition to the park system.”

When asked why they don't participant in Vigo County Parks Programming, the #1 response was:

**Not aware of programs**

“Work with Chamber of Commerce to add events on community calendar.”

“I would like to see more promotion of programs and special events-especially through Facebook and your website. Perhaps with the new, updated website this will happen. Just seems that lately, I missed out on events that I only found out about, after the fact, through news coverage.”

“Love the bike park, would like more swimming options. Great camping spots but needs advertised better. I lived here for years before I knew there were camping options. Upkeep on current parks.”

When asked to allocate funding among competing categories, the community identified the following:

**1st - Improve quality of existing parks**

2nd - New aquatic features at existing multi-purpose county parks

3rd - Improve quality of existing trails

4th - Trail development (additional)

“Need more swimming or water activities for summer.”

“Put rowboats or kayaks at Hawthorne Park. The lake needs something since the beach is closed. I think campers have not come back since there is no beach.”

“Griffin is a wonderful place which I visit most of Vigo County parks. Sometimes it seems that the trails could use more maintenance though. I understand trail maintenance is a large undertaking, but maybe more volunteers or full-time staff are needed?”

“I would like to improve what we have. Don't stretch the budget buying more to maintain. I don't understand why the JI Case reservoir is not maintained for fishing. I see people trying to fish out of it all the time. The weeds in the water make that very difficult.”

And the moss covering the water is terrible. Please use a small amount of money to treat this water. Some people cannot afford to fish other places.”

Overwhelmingly, the community rates the **quality of activities, programs, and special events** provided by the department as **“Very Good”** or **“Satisfactory,”** indicating there is room for some new opportunities.

“We love the movie in the park a Hawthorn. Any other kinds of family activities would be appreciated.”

“I think there is a real opportunity to add a disc golf course to at least one of the county parks at a relatively low cost. Disc Golf is a growing sport that I enjoy playing with my children.”

“Griffin Bike Park is a gem in the county park system. Adding other activity-specific outdoor amenities (perhaps a kayak park?) would increase usage and bring additional people into our county.”

Of community respondents  
**96.4% rated the importance of natural space VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT.**  
The Vigo County community cares about parks!



## CONCLUSION & MOVING FORWARD

After thoughtful discussion and comprehensive analysis, the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department has determined a course of action for the next five years. The Department is dedicated to improving, maintaining, and making the best use of a park system that needs focused attention after a period of land acquisition. Department and Parks Board leadership are responsible stewards of Vigo County’s public assets and tax dollars, and respectfully tend to Vigo County parkland. Community members benefit from the hard work done by the department through improved placemaking, economic development, and social and physical engagement. Vigo County Parks and Recreation is a gem for southwest Indiana and will continue to serve the community in positive and unique ways.





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## VIGO COUNTY OVERVIEW & NATURAL FEATURES

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### VIGO COUNTY

Vigo County was established February 1, 1818 and quickly became a focal point for commerce and travel in western Indiana. It was noted for its rapid development in agricultural, manufacturing and banking lines. The Wabash River became the main artery for travel and trade. It saved the settlers from stagnation and isolation. Its channels stimulated business and established the foundation for growth. The Old National Road, now U.S. 40, cemented the path of development. It was the “Gateway to the West.” The Old Indian

Orchard and the woods and prairies gave way to fields and fences, houses and barns, bridges and railroads, and mills and factories. This spelled the beginning of the evolution of the present Vigo County.

*For a more comprehensive look at Vigo County’s history, see Appendix A: Vigo County History.*

# GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

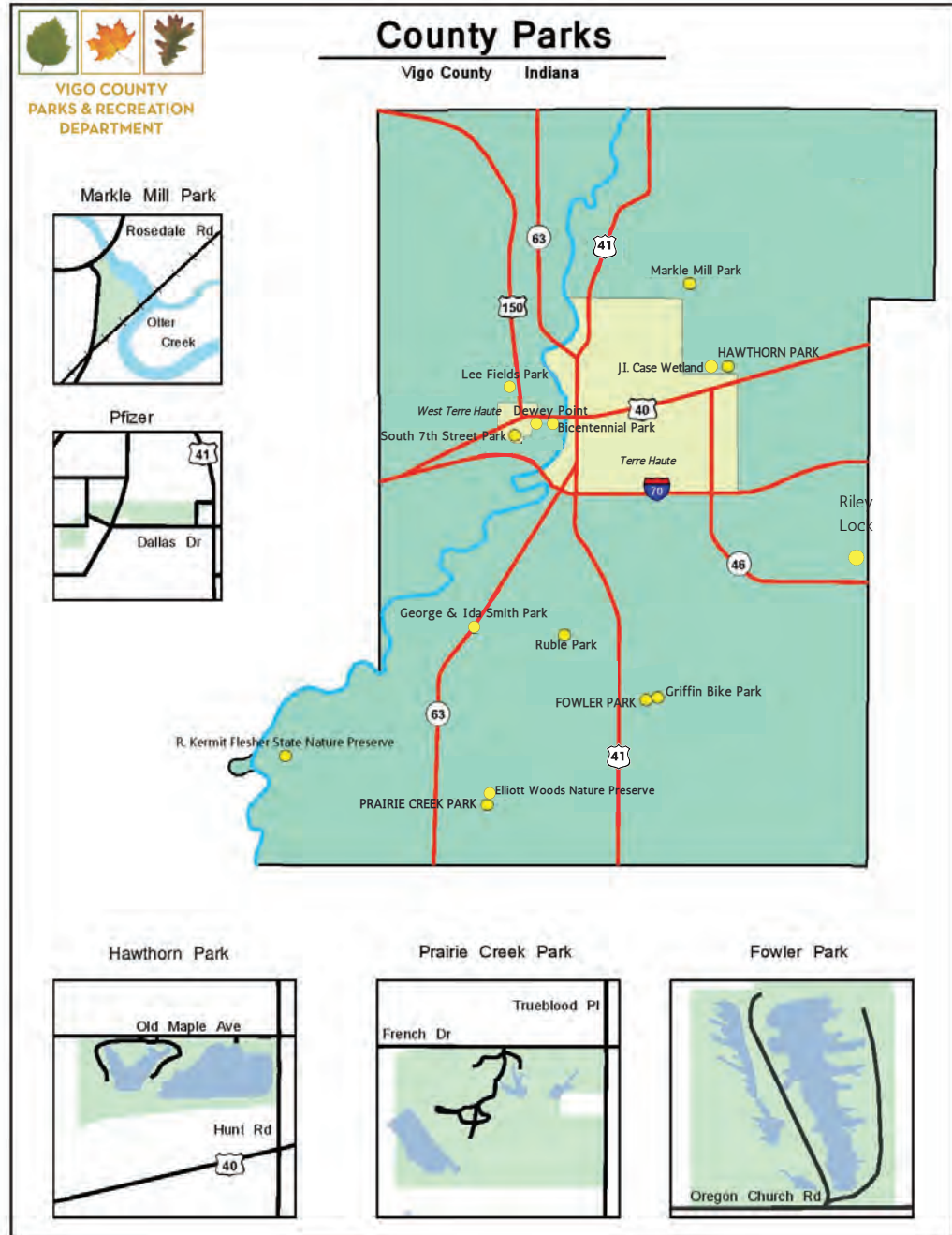
## LOCATION

Vigo County is located in west central Indiana. It is 507 feet above sea level at latitude 39'28" N and longitude 87'24" W. It is bordered by Parke and Vermillion Counties to the north, to the east is Clay County, to the south is Sullivan County, and the state of Illinois is on the west. Vigo, Clay, and Vermillion Counties comprise the Terre Haute Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The county has four incorporated areas: the city of Terre Haute and the towns of West Terre Haute, Seelyville, and Riley. The city of Terre Haute serves as the county seat.

## HIGHWAYS AND NEIGHBORING LARGE CITIES

Highways: Interstate 70 east-west, U.S. 40 and 150 east-west, U.S. 41 north-south, Indiana 46 east-west, and Indiana 63 north-south provide easy access to and from Vigo County.

Metropolitan cities within an 180 mile radius of Vigo County are: Chicago, IL; Cincinnati, OH; Evansville, IN; Indianapolis, IN; and St. Louis, MO.



# DEMOGRAPHICS: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND EDUCATION FACTORS

*All statistical information collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates, July 1, 2018 (V2018), American Community Survey.*

	VIGO COUNTY INDIANA	STATE OF INDIANA
<b>POPULATION ESTIMATES, July 1, 2018, (V2018)</b>	<b>107,386</b>	<b>6,691,878</b>
Population estimates base, April 1, 2010, (V2018)	107,848	6,484,061
Population, percent change- April 1, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2018, (V2018)	-0.4%	3.2%
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	107,848	6,483,802
<b>AGE AND SEX</b>		
Persons under 5 years, percent	5.8%	6.3%
Persons under 18 years, percent	20.5%	23.4%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	16.3%	15.8%
Female persons, percent	49.3%	50.7%
<b>RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN</b>		
White alone, percent	87.9%	85.1%
Black or African American alone, percent	7.3%	9.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	0.4%	0.4%
Asian alone, percent	2.0%	2.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	* Z	0.1%
Two or More Races, percent	2.4%	2.1%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	2.7%	7.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	85.5%	78.9%

<b>POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS</b>		
Veterans, 2013-2017	7,411	397,715
Foreign born persons, percent, 2013-2017	3.2%	5.0%
<b>HOUSING</b>		
Housing units, July 1, 2018, (V2018)	47,532	2,903,554
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2013-2017	60.5%	68.9%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2013-2017	\$90,700	\$130,200
Median selected monthly owner costs-with a mortgage, 2013-2017	\$941	\$1,109
Median selected monthly owner costs-without a mortgage, 2013-2017	\$371	\$389
Median gross rent, 2013-2017	\$717	\$782
Building permits, 2018	93	21,480
<b>FAMILIES &amp; LIVING ARRANGEMENTS</b>		
Households, 2013-2017	41,164	2,537,189
Persons per household, 2013-2017	2.40	2.53
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2013-2017	78.9%	85.0%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 year+, 2013-2017	4.7%	8.4%
<b>COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE</b>		
Households with a computer, percent, 2013-2017	83.9%	85.5%
Households with a broadband Internet subscription, percent, 2013-2017	72.6%	75.0%
<b>EDUCATION</b>		
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2013-2017	87.8%	88.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2013-2017	23.5%	25.3%

<b>HEALTH</b>		
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2013-2017	14.0%	9.9%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	9.1%	9.7%
<b>ECONOMY</b>		
In civilian labor force, total, percent of population age 16 years+, 2013-2017	58.6%	63.8%
In civilian labor force, female, percent of population age 16 years+, 2013-2017	56.6%	58.9%
Total accommodation and food services sales, 2012 (\$1,000)	230,111	13,076,602
Total health care and social assistance receipts/revenue, 2012 (\$1,000)	1,138,134	42,493,117
Total manufacturers' shipments, 2012 (\$1,000)	3,512,863	242,763,842
Total merchant wholesaler sales, 2012 (\$1,000)	506,626	81,173,422
Total retail sales, 2012 (\$1,000)	1,588,274	85,857,962
Total retail sales per capita, 2012	\$14,648	\$13,133
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>		
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2013-2017	19.9	23.4
<b>INCOME &amp; POVERTY</b>		
Median household income (in 2017 dollars), 2013-2017	\$42,030	\$52,182
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2017 dollars), 2013-2017	\$22,932	\$27,305
Persons in poverty, percent	19.4%	13.1%
<i>*Z=Value greater than 0 but less than half unit of measure shown</i>		

<b>BUSINESSES</b>		
Total employer establishments, 2017	2,470	148,377
Total employment, 2017	43,681	2,779,124
Total annual payroll, 2017 (\$1,000)	1,625,830	122,892,875
Total employment, percent change, 2016-2017	-0.3%	2.2%
Total nonemployer establishments, 2017	4,883	415,261
All firms, 2012	7,194	479,059
Men-owned firms, 2012	3,479	253,533
Women-owned firms, 2012	2,132	162,798
Minority-owned firms, 2012	620	61,252
Nonminority-owned firms, 2012	6,159	405,090
Veteran-owned firms, 2012	613	45,174
Nonveteran-owned firms, 2012	5,944	412,543





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## SOCIAL & ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Vigo County has seen a slight decrease in population in the recent decade. The diversity of the population of the county, in terms of race and origin, is similar to that of the state of Indiana, with 87.9% of the population being white, 7.3% being Black or African American, and 2.7% of the population with Hispanic or Latino origin. One striking statistic is that 14% of the population lives with a disability and is under the age of 65 years; this is compared to 9.9% in the state of Indiana. The Vigo Parks and Recreation Department recognizes the importance of identifying the needs of persons with disabilities in the community (please see the Accessibility and Universal Design section in Part III of the document). This is also represented in the addition of a strategic action item stating *“Add the option in the programming registration process to identify whether a special accommodation is needed”* (see Theme 2: Community-Driven Programming). This simple acknowledgement and resulting accommodation can make the park system’s programming incredibly inclusive.

The county poverty rate of 19.4% is significantly higher than the state average of 13.1%. Persons who have little resources can attend an overwhelming majority of the department’s programming, large events, and have access to the facilities free of charge (or for a nominal fee). According to [countyhealthrankings.org](http://countyhealthrankings.org), Vigo county has 25% children living in poverty, compared to a state average of 18%. The department’s partnerships with the Vigo County Library, local school system, and Trips for Kids at Griffin Bike Park, to name a few, are ways that the department collaborates with agencies to offer free services and one-of-a-kind experiences to Vigo County children. The historically under-resourced town of West Terre Haute has seen investments in parks in the recent decade, with the addition of Lee Fields Park, South 7<sup>th</sup> Street Park, and the expansion of Dewey Point/Bicentennial Park and the connection to the Wabashiki trail system. Continued partnerships with the Indiana Department of Transportation will bring stronger and safer connections to West Terre Haute, as a trail connector will be established across the Wabash River on U.S. Highway 40.

## NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES

### TOPOGRAPHY

Before continental ice sheets covered Vigo County, it was a rugged, hilly area. The last three ice ages, the Kansan, the Illinois, and the Wisconsin, brought about many changes. The entire county was covered by boulders and pebbles in the clay matrix called, glacial till. The combined deposits left by these glaciers are as much as 150 feet in thickness. These deposits make up virtually all the surface features of Vigo County.

Presently, the topography of the county falls into three divisions- the river valleys, the upland, and the till plain. The most prominent

feature of the river valleys is the Wabash River Valley which extends the entire length of the county and covers about one fourth of Vigo County. The flood plains of the Wabash River occupy 11% of the county and average approximately 20 feet above the low level of the river. Terraces rise from 50 to 75 feet above the river, but merge into the flood plain in the southern part of the county. The City of Terre Haute is situated on such a terrace. East and west of the Wabash River extensive dissected and leached uplands formed from the Illinois ice sheet occupies about 55% of the area outside of the river and terrace area. These uplands have an elevation which averages about 150 feet above the Wabash River. The general

level plains are located in the northwestern part of the county and comprise about 50 square miles. Within the 415 square miles of the county, the elevation ranges between 450 feet and 600 feet.

## SOILS

Vigo County has eight different types of soil that make up the land. Soil associations and a general soil map of the county have been compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. Knowing these soils, their abilities and limitations, gives the department an edge in planning for open space, facilities, recreational activities, and conservation efforts.

## WATER

The tributary streams of the Wabash River flow easterly and westerly with a trend toward the south. The southerly dip of the county's substrata not only causes a southerly trend in the direction of stream movement, but also causes them to crowd their southern banks. The south branch of Honey Creek is the only stream of any size flowing toward the north. The greater portion of the surface of the county slopes toward the Wabash River, but portions of Riley and Pierson Townships are in the valley of the Eel River. The major tributaries of the Wabash River include Otter Creek, Lost Creek, Honey Creek, Prairie Creek, Coal Creek, Sugar Creek, and Clear Creek.

## CLIMATE

Vigo County's climate is humid continental. It is influenced by the interaction of warm air masses from the Gulf of Mexico and cool, dry Canadian air masses. As a result, weather conditions are changeable. Temperatures rarely fall below 0 F in winter; the mean annual temperature in 2014 was 54.25 F.

## AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY

Much of the county is on uplands and ranges from large, nearly level areas to very steep broken land. Many areas along the bottom are subject to flooding by the Wabash River. About two thirds of the acreage in Vigo County is used for crops and cropland. Cash grain farming is the major farming enterprise in the county, but general farming is still important. Livestock and livestock products are the major sources of farm income on the general farms. Presently, 500 acres of farmland is lost each year, mostly due to poor economy, and also development.

## LAND AVAILABILITY/INTEREST

Discussions with the Fontanet Bean Dinner Association have been intermittent in recent years. The Association owns ten acres of land in Fontanet, Indiana, which they are interested in donating to the parks department. This region of the county has been identified as an underserved area, in terms of parkland. The Association hosts a decades-long-standing Bean Dinner event that is held on the property annually, which they would like to continue in the future. Concerns from the department focus on the upkeep of the property related to the preservation of the barn and the need for grass to be mowed weekly during growing season. This is also of concern because there are no maintenance facilities near the property and would require regular transportation of maintenance equipment. The feasibility of a partnership and shared maintenance responsibilities are at the center of these continued discussions. The property could potentially be utilized as a preservation of open space in that region, and as a good faith effort with the Association to keep the annual Bean Dinner.

Properties along the Wabash river, near Bicentennial Park and the Wabashiki Trail connection are of interest to the Department. This general area has seen recent investments by local/state entities and continues to be a suitable opportunity for partnerships and completing the scenic trail connections near the Wabash River watershed.



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## PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT CHARACTERISTICS & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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### DEPARTMENT VISION, MISSION & VALUES

#### VISION

The vision of the Vigo County Parks Department is to meet the recreation and leisure needs of Vigo County citizens and visitors, leading to a heightened quality of life.

#### MISSION

The mission of the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department is to improve quality of life and provide meaningful experiences for the citizens of Vigo County through expertly maintained areas and facilities, environmental education, accessible water, and preservation of the environment allowing for recreation, social activity, exploration, and solitude.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department staff created workplace and customer-oriented values on April 8, 2014. These values reflect workplace (internal) and customer-oriented (external) expectations the staff has prioritized as essential to the successful provision of public parks and recreation services.

## WORKPLACE VALUES:

### Communication

- Meet collectively for discussions
- Show appreciation for others' efforts
- Communicate the workplace values to seasonal staff and Park Caretakers
- Trust
- Seek opinions and ask for information from each other
- Maintain a strong work ethic and professionalism

### Understanding/Empathy

- Each staff member will become familiar with other parks and events
- Proactively strive to help others

### Development

- Maintain current skills
- Develop new skills from current staff and outside sources
- Provide opportunities for staff socialization

### Engagement

- Incorporate staff into master planning and capital investment options
- Inform the Parks Board of staff activities
- Engage the Parks Board and county officials with park operations and features

### Land Conservation

- Engage in proper planning
- Connect staff with the environment
- Increase knowledge of nature

### Safety

- Provide and use proper personal protective equipment
- Evaluate each task and properly plan for staff capabilities

## CUSTOMER-ORIENTED VALUES:

### Customer Service

- Put the public first to create a positive experience
- Engage with the public by actively approaching and remaining visible
- Train staff on park opportunities
- Provide and maintain adequate signage

### Interpretation

- Provide and maintain adequate signage
- Connect people with nature through education and meeting emotional needs

### Attractiveness/Impression

- Ensure landscaping is aesthetically and environmentally conscious
- Provide and maintain adequate signage
- Maintain cleanliness of rentals, restrooms, trails, and vehicles

### Safety

- Maintain all facilities and amenities to safety standards
- Provide and maintain adequate signage
- Enforce park policies
- Be visible



## PARK AND RECREATION BOARD STRUCTURE

Vigo County Council passed Ordinance No. 1 on November 5, 1965, establishing the Vigo County Park and Recreation Board in accordance with Indiana Code 36-10-3, General Park and Recreation Law. The first Board was appointed on December 13, 1965 and held its first meeting on January 25, 1966. The ordinance was amended on October 26, 1982, reestablishing the Board. On October 26, 2009, the Board approved amending the name of the organization to Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department, adding an 's' to Park to identify the expansion of the parks system. This officially amended the Board name also, hereafter referred to as the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board.

The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board operates in accordance with Indiana Code 36-10-3, General Park and Recreation Law.

The Board consists of seven members who serve four-year terms. Two members of the Board are appointed by the judge of the Circuit Court, one member by the County Commissioners, and two by the County Council. These members are appointed on the basis of their interest in and knowledge of parks and recreation. No more than one member appointed by these entities shall be affiliated

with the same political party. The County Extension Committee (Board) may select one of its members, the County Extension Coordinator or the County Extension Agent, to serve as an ex officio board member. Lastly, the Mayor of Terre Haute also appoints one member as an ex officio board member, whose four-year term runs concurrent with the Mayoral term. The member appointed by the Mayor must be affiliated with a different political party than the member appointed by the County Commissioners. By virtue of the appointment process, the Board is bi-partisan.

At each January meeting, the current Board members nominate individuals on the Board to serve in the officer positions. Officers of the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board are elected by the current members of the Board.

The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board meets the fourth Monday of each month, unless conflict forces an alternate date.

When necessary, the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board will meet in Executive Session in accordance with Indiana Code 5-14-1.5, Public Meetings (Open Door Law).

## VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board  
Vigo County Government Building  
155 Oak Street  
Terre Haute, IN 47807

### **EDDY ADAMS**

Term ends: 12/31/2020  
Appointed by: Circuit Court Judge

### **JEFF FISHER**

Term ends: 12/31/2021  
Appointed by: Circuit Court Judge

### **DONA GRIFFIN**

Term ends: 12/31/2023  
Appointed by: Mayor of Terre Haute

### **ABBY DESBORO**

Term ends: 12/31/2020  
Appointed by: Vigo County Commissioners

### **DANA GADEKEN**

Term ends: none  
Appointed by: Vigo County Extension Board

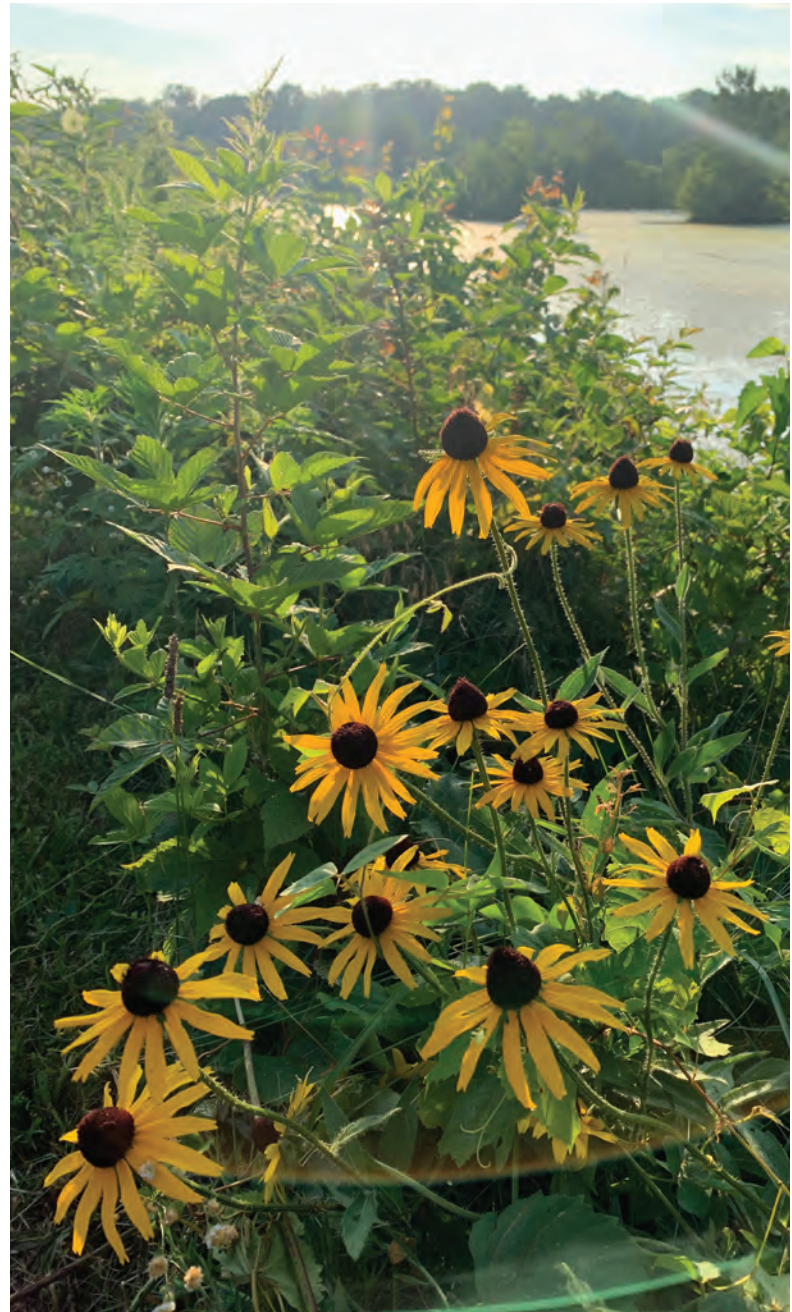
### **JOE NEWTON**

Term ends: 12/31/2022  
Appointed by: Vigo County Council

### **AARON GADBERRY**

Term ends: 12/31/2020  
Appointed by: Vigo County Council

*Current as of 11-21-19*



## STAFF STRUCTURE

Overall administration of the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department is the responsibility of the Superintendent, who is appointed by the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board.

Daily operations, special projects, and staff management are overseen by the Assistant Superintendent. The Assistant Superintendent operates under the direct supervision of the Superintendent. The Assistant Superintendent directly supervises the Maintenance Specialists and the Park Caretakers.

Front of office and bookkeeping are overseen by the Administrative Assistant, who operates under the direct supervision of the Superintendent.

The Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent, along with an Administrative Assistant comprise the Administrative Staff.

Daily operations are completed by the maintenance staff, consisting of seven Maintenance Specialists. The Maintenance Specialists operate under the direct supervision of the Assistant Superintendent. The Maintenance Specialists directly supervise seasonal staff, which includes maintenance, gatehouse attendant, security, and beach attendant positions.

Department special events and environmental-based programming are organized and implemented by the Natural Resource Programmer, who operates under the direct supervision of the Superintendent.

Department Special events and recreation-based programming are organized and implemented by the Recreation Coordinator, who operates under the direct supervision of the Superintendent.

Department operations related to the Griffin Bike Park are the responsibility of the Griffin Bike Park Manager, who operates under direct supervision of the Superintendent.

Care of the parkland outside of traditional work hours is the responsibility of the Park Caretakers. The Park Caretakers operate under the direct supervision of the Assistant Superintendent.

## VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT STAFF

### CURRENT FULL-TIME STAFF

**Adam Grossman**, Superintendent

**Stanley (Brian) Gilbert**, Assistant Superintendent

**Michaela French**, Administrative Assistant

**Laura Maloney**, Natural Resource Programmer

**Rich Moore**, Griffin Bike Park Manager

**Jeff Bunch**, Maintenance Specialist

**Shawn Bunch**, Maintenance Specialist

**Anthony Coletti**, Maintenance Specialist

**Keith Hollingsworth**, Maintenance Specialist

**Trueman Fraza**, Maintenance Specialist

**Richard Noe**, Maintenance Specialist

**Mark Wiggins**, Maintenance Specialist

### CURRENT PART-TIME STAFF

**Emily Starbuck**, Recreation Coordinator

**Collin Utley**, Maintenance

**Jeremey Thompson**, Maintenance

### SEASONAL STAFF

*(Approximately 30 seasonal staff, hired annually, employed May 1-October 15)*

Maintenance; Gatehouse; Attendant; Beach Attendant

*Current as of 11-21-19*

## BUDGET

The annual Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department budget is developed by the Superintendent with input from staff. The budget is approved by the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board prior to being submitted to the Vigo County Council, which reviews and approves the budget. Budget hearings are held annually in September. The budget and proposed tax rate are submitted to the State Board of Tax Commissioners to review and make changes if needed. The State Board of Tax Commissioners issues an order on the budget in time to allow for its appropriation for the following year.

The following operating fund budgets were approved for the years 2009 through 2019:

2009	\$1,185,073.00
2010	\$1,102,881.00
2011	\$1,028,505.00
2012	\$1,092,317.00
2013	\$1,087,558.00
2014	\$1,155,338.00
2015	\$1,176,053.00
2016	\$1,250,366.00
2017	\$1,269,459.00
2018	\$1,256,003.00
2019	\$1,272,360.00

Additional special, non-reverting operating funds are generated through camping fees, reservations, maple syrup sales, and special events. These funds are heavily relied upon to purchase playground and other park equipment, and to fund special projects and events.

Donations, grants, and capital campaigns are sought and implemented when needed for the completion of projects.

## WABASH VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Wabash Valley Community Foundation currently manages several funds, generated through donations and grants, for the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department.

The funds include:

- Endowment Fund
- Projects Fund

The Wabash Valley Community Foundation was founded in 1991 to build the Valley's philanthropic resources. They encourage people to create permanently endowed funds that support charitable opportunities throughout Vigo County's local communities now and forever. The staff members, along with board members and volunteers, work together to assure donors achieve their charitable goals. The Community Foundation assists individuals in matching their charitable interests with the communities' needs. The Wabash Valley Community Foundation informs and engages people and organizations in supporting their communities.

### CONTACT

Beth Tevlin, Executive Director  
2901 Ohio Boulevard, Suite 153  
Terre Haute, IN 47803  
Phone: 812-232-2234  
Fax: 812-234-4853  
[beth@wvcf.com](mailto:beth@wvcf.com)





## PARK LOCATIONS AND NARRATIVES

Total Acreage of Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department parkland: 2,690.17 acres  
Total Water Acreage of Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department: 143.00 acres

## FOWLER PARK

Address: 3000 E. Oregon Church Rd., Terre Haute, IN 47802

Park Phone Number: 812-462-3413

Total Parkland Acreage: 162.82

Total Water Acreage: Ruble Lake: 25.90

### HISTORY

In 1967, 140 acres of land in the south-central area of Vigo County was purchased from the Peabody Coal Company to establish the first county park—Fowler Park. The park was dedicated to the memory of Eugene Fowler, the first man to lose his life in the Vietnam War. Additional land, with a house, was purchased in 1970 for use as a caretaker's home. Approximately 300 acres of land east of Fowler Park were donated in 1981, named the Fowler Park Wilderness Area. The last addition of land was in 1995; land north of the park was purchased, bringing the park to a total of 462.82 acres. In 2016, the Fowler Park Wilderness Area was re-purposed and transformed into a 300-acre community mountain bike park, named Griffin Bike Park.

### PARK FEATURES

Located one-half mile off U.S. 41 on Oregon Church Road, Fowler Park serves as a multipurpose park. Inside Fowler Park are two lakes, a campground, picnic shelters, playgrounds, trails, a covered bridge and a pioneer village with a working gristmill. Fowler Lake (25.9 acres) has a boat launch, a beach for swimming. The lake is stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, and black crappie.

Peninsulas on the east side of the lake comprise the campground. Fowler Park is the only county park where campsites are located next to the lake edge. The campground has 35 sites with electricity and approximately 15 primitive campsites. Shower houses, restrooms, and a dump station are available to campers. The second lake is located on the west side of the park hidden behind the hillside.

Largemouth bass, crappie, and bluegill are found in it. Camping season begins May 1st and concludes October 15th each year.

Two picnic shelters on the parkland each hold between 150-200 people. A large playground is adjacent to Shelter A (east side of Fowler Lake) and a smaller one is adjacent to Shelter B (west side of Fowler Lake).

Six hiking trails wind through Fowler Park's woodlands, with trailheads at the road on the west side of the park. Trails range in difficulty from easy to moderate.

### HISTORICAL & CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

#### Pioneer Village

Pioneer Village consists of 20 log buildings, a log barn, gristmill, and covered bridge. The log barn houses a gift shop and a public meeting/banquet room available for rent.

Pioneer Village is the center of attraction for a number of events and programs held annually at the park. The Village Folk, a volunteer group, brings the village alive for the annual Mini Pioneer Days, Pioneer Days, and Christmas Walk events. The Blacksmith Shop in the village is opened up every fourth Saturday, April through October, for the popular Intro to Blacksmithing class led by two of our skilled volunteer blacksmiths. Pioneer Village is also open for the public for walk-through tours every third Saturday of each month during the summer. Summer in the Village is also an opportunity for those interested in joining the Pioneer Village volunteer group to learn about the pioneer life, trades, skills, cabins, etc. Tours are given to individuals and groups year-round upon request. The village is frequently the scene of weddings and family photos; couples and families choose the church, gristmill, or covered bridge for their backdrop.





## GRIFIN BIKE PARK

Address: 10700 Bono Rd., Terre Haute, IN 47802

Total Parkland Acreage: 300 acres

Total Water Acreage: Striker Lake: 30.5 acres

The Griffin Bike Park, named after Sgt. Dale Griffin who gave his life in service in Afghanistan was opened in 2016. Built on the grounds of what was formerly known as the wilderness area, this park has been supported through the efforts of many volunteers, and local businesses. Drawing visitors from all around the country, it still has room to grow. This park has features that cater to all skill sets of riders, from beginners to pro. The park includes 18 miles of cross country trail, 18 X- Games style dirt jumps, two pump tracks, exclusive beginner areas, a dual slalom course, terrain park, a lake jump, two floating trails, and a newly developed three-quarter mile trail designed with adaptive equipment in mind.

Griffin Bike Parks hosts numerous races each year, including standard cross-country races, endurance events, dual slalom and pump track series, short track races and trail runs. Multi-day skills clinics and festivals are also offered throughout the year. Griffin Bike Park is also home to the Griffin Bike Park Trips for Kids chapter, providing rides, bikes, outdoor recreation, and educational opportunities to children who wouldn't otherwise have the unique bike park experience.

## HAWTHORN PARK & J.I. CASE WETLAND WILDLIFE REFUGE

Address: 6067 E. Old Maple Ave., Terre Haute, Indiana 47803

Park Phone Number: 812-462-3325

Total Acreage: 256.72 acres

Total Water Acreage: 68.60 acres

Burns Lake: 18.30 acres

J.I. Case Wetland Wildlife Refuge Lake: 50.30 acres

### HISTORY:

A major multi-purpose park was established in the northeast section of the county in 1980 when 233.22 acres of land was purchased in Lost Creek Township. Of that acreage, 206.55 acres (originally owned by Anton Hulman) was purchased from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and 26.67 acres from Herbert and Lorene Moss. As an abundance of hawthorn trees were growing on the property, the park was named Hawthorn Park. The caretaker's home and the maintenance shops were located on the Moss property, across the road from the park property. In 1985, the Vigo County Commissioners deeded approximately 23.5 acres to the Parks Board. This addition brought the total acreage of Hawthorn Park to 256.72 acres.

### PARK OVERVIEW & FEATURES:

Located on East Old Maple Avenue, Hawthorn is six-tenths of a mile north of U.S. 40 off of Hunt Road. The park is divided into two major areas of land, Hawthorn Park on the west and J.I. Case Wetland Wildlife Refuge on the east. On the park's southern boundary is Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology and the Heritage Road National Trail.

Inside Hawthorn Park is a lake, campground, picnic shelters, playgrounds, archery range, trails, and labyrinth. Burns Lake (18.3 acres) has a boat launch and fishing docking located around the lakes north side. The lake is stocked with bluegill, redear sunfish, largemouth bass, channel catfish, and crappie.



The campground, located on the west side of the park, has 53 sites with electricity and 10 primitive sites. Shower houses, restrooms, and a sump station are available to campers.

Three picnic shelters on the parkland each hold 200 people and are available for year-round rentals. A large playground is near the Dogwood Shelter. The park also has a fully accessible 1,850-foot trail that leads down to a wildlife observation shelter that overlooks J.I. Case Wetland Wildlife Refuge.

The levee for J.I. Case Wetland Wildlife Refuge was constructed in 1984. The lake was filled during early 1985 and a boat launch added. The primary purpose for the lake is waterfowl management with fishing designated as a secondary use. The lake (50.3 acres) attracts migratory birds in the fall and provides excellent fishing opportunities, especially in the spring. The lake is stocked with bluegill, redear sunfish, largemouth bass, channel catfish, black crappie, yellow bullheads, and warmouth.

The 23.5 acre area owned by the Department, east of Hunt Road and across from J.I. Case Wetland Wildlife Refuge, has been left in its natural state and serves as a wildlife nesting area.

As a multi-purpose park, Hawthorn attracts a wide variety of visitors from all walks of life. They include campers, fishermen, swimmers, and runners who utilize the natural resources. There are many groups, like businesses and organizations, schools, reunions, churches, and Scouts that rent facilities for events. And plenty of individuals seeking a serene atmosphere.

The layout of the roads and trails at Hawthorn Park is especially conducive to joggers and runners. The Terre Haute triathlon, a Tri-Fed sanctioned event, is held annually at the park and entices sports enthusiasts from all over the United States. The Terre Haute Road Runners sponsor their runs in the park each year.

### **KENNETH E. SMITH MEMORIAL LABYRINTH AND MEDITATION GARDEN AT HAWTHORN PARK**

The Kenneth E. Smith Memorial Labyrinth is located in Hawthorn Park adjacent to the Dogwood Shelter. The labyrinth, completed in 2003, is an 80-foot diameter circle constructed out of aggregate mix concrete. It is patterned after the labyrinth that was laid on the floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France around 1220 A.D. The singular path is switchback, turning and twisting to encourage walkers to concentrate as they make their way forward to the middle of the labyrinth and back again. There are 34 turns on the path going to the center. The path allows wheelchairs or walkers to be used. A meditation garden surrounds the labyrinth. A comfortable swing, benches, a babbling water fountain, rosebushes, trees, and shrubs create a quiet space and blend into the park proper. For many years following installation, the garden was maintained by the Wabash Valley Master Gardeners.

The labyrinth has been found in all traditions throughout history in various forms around the world. It is an ancient therapeutic tool that has been rediscovered and is growing in popularity, being built at hospitals, schools, parks, and on private properties. Unlike the maze, the labyrinth has only one path so there are no tricks and no dead ends. Labyrinths have served as spaces for meditation, ritual, community celebrations, gatherings, and children's games, as well as holistic problem-solving devices. The labyrinth went through a renovation in 2018 with new concrete, a new water feature, and also in 2019, upgrades to the area surrounding the labyrinth.

The labyrinth and garden are designed for all ages. For older users, it can help relieve stress and provide a place for meditation. Children simply enjoy the challenge of staying within the boundaries of the path.

Mrs. Lavern Smith donated the major part of the funding for this project in memory of her late husband, Kenneth E. Smith, who died in May 2000.

## PRAIRIE CREEK PARK

Address: 3032 W. French Dr., Terre Haute, IN 47802

Park Phone Number: 812-898-2279

Total Parkland Acreage: 282.72

Total Water Acreage: 16.0 acres

Prairie Creek Lake: 13.40 acres

Pond: 1.80 acres

Pond: 0.80 acres

### HISTORY:

Prairie Creek Park was added to the Vigo County parks system in 1972. The land, 107.25 acres located in Prairie Creek Township in the southern end of the county, was acquired from the Prairie Creek Conservancy District. The park was named after Prairie Creek which flows through the township. The Parks and Recreation Department shares an adjacent Public Law 566 flood control lake with private landowners to the northwest. In 1983, Ruth Newlin deeded an additional eight acres of land to the west of the park. Prairie Creek Park grew to 202.75 acres in 1997, when the park purchased 87.5 acres of land to the east from Karolyn Logan. In January 2000, an additional 80 acres of land located north, across the road from the park, was purchased from Arlen Elliott, extending Prairie Creek Park to 282.725 acres.

### PARK OVERVIEW & FEATURES:

Situated on West French Drive, Prairie Cree Park is four miles west of U.S. 41 and one and six-tenths miles east of State Road 63, making it accessible from either highway. It is a multipurpose park and its distinctive feature is a beautiful grove of old growth sugar maple trees that turn to a brilliant golden yellow, red, and orange in the fall.

Within the park proper, one long, moderate, continuous trail winds in and about the grounds with numerous access points. A small family graveyard sits on a hilltop, undisturbed in the woods on the east side of the park. Members of the Kerchieval family rest in peace at the very old site.





On its south border, Prairie Creek Park adjoins a 13.4-acre lake. At the front of the park is a small 1.8-acre pond. Channel catfish, largemouth bass, redear sunfish, bluegill, and black crappie are found in these bodies of water.

The campground has approximately 40 sites with electricity and two primitive sites. The campground is divided into two sections, one much smaller than the other. Groups wanting to experience primitive camping can set up tents in the small clearing south of the pond, or set up in the smaller campground area, to keep their group contained. A modern shower house, restrooms, and a dump station are available to campers.

Two picnic shelters on the parkland each seat 80 people comfortably and are available as rentals year-round. A large playground is adjacent to Maple Shelter. Across from Maple Shelter is a ball field with a backstop. Centered between the campground and the shelters is a multipurpose court with two tennis courts and basketball goals that attract enthusiasts of both sports. Nearby are four sets of horseshoe pits.

Prairie Creek Park is best known for its Sugar Camp. In late January–early March, maple trees are tapped within the park. The sap is collected and routed, using plastic tubing and a pump system, to a holding tank located next to the Sugar Cabin. The Sugar Cabin is an authentic log cabin with evaporating equipment to produce maple syrup. As maple syrup is produced, it is filtered, bottled, and made available for purchase. The Sugar Cabin is open to visitors anytime a sufficient amount of sap is available to fire the evaporator.

Elliott Woods, located adjacent to Prairie Creek Park north of West French Drive, is a unique woodland. Its canopy of trees has all but eliminated under-story growth making visibility good for woodland recreational activities. At least 26 species of trees, 11 varieties of flowers, and nine species of wildlife have been recorded. Elliott Woods Trail, a 1.5-mile trail that winds through the property, was completed in 2009. Parking and access to the Elliott Woods Trail are located within Prairie Creek Park.



## BICENTENIAL PARK: DEWEY POINT TRAILHEAD & WABASHIKI STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AREA

Address: 110 E. National Ave., Terre Haute, IN 47885

Full Time Maintenance Staff: Oscar

Total Acreage: 812.50 acres

In 2009, Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department partnered with Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to purchase over 800 acres of Wabash River bottomland with the support of an Indiana Heritage Trust grant. The 800 acres is located directly across the river from the City of Terre Haute. The land extends south of US 40 and continues just south of I-70. Previous usage of the property was agricultural purposes. In 2007, the previous owners signed a perpetual easement with IUSDA Wetland Reserve Program.

The purchase of this bottomland was to provide recreational opportunities for the citizens of Vigo County and a natural habitat for the native and migratory wildlife. IDNR intends to expand the acreage to potentially 7,100 acres. This area has been named the Wabashiki State Fish and Wildlife Area.

In 2015, Dewey Point opened, featuring a new shelter with wildlife viewing stations, restroom, and parking facility. This property, donated by Susan Dewey, has helped make this area a birding destination with a beautiful trailhead and viewing platform for many species.

The trailhead and wildlife area are encompassed in Bicentennial Park, an area developed along with Riverscape, the Vigo County Commissioners, Duke Energy, landowners, and other partners. This passive park was started a decade ago with property acquisition and still continues developing today, although much has been done to gain parking access and a trailhead along the river, and install a .6-mile paved trail extending from the new connector trail off of Old US 40 and connecting to the river. This park will still take time to grow and come to fruition, but the vision will be a river walk and passive recreation.





## **SOUTH SEVENTH STREET PARK**

Address: 830 S. 7th St., West Terre Haute, IN 47885

Total Acreage: 1.00 acres

The South Seventh Street Park is located on the south edge of West Terre Haute in Sugar Creek Township. The one acre of property on South 7th Street was deeded to the Park Board in November 1974, by the Town of West Terre Haute. The park was named for its location.

Renovated in 2017, it is now equipped with new playground equipment, a refreshed basketball court, a portable restroom facility, and a picnic shelter. In the center is an open play space. This park is used by neighborhood children.



## **LEE FIELDS PARK**

Address: 2430 Bentine Lane, West Terre Haute, IN 47885

Total Acreage: 7.88 acres

Lee Fields Park (7.88 acres) is a neighborhood park located on Ferguson Hill in Sugar Creek Township off U.S. Highway 150. The land had once been the playground of the old Concannon High School and was deeded to the Park Board in April 1975 by the Vigo County School Corporation. The park was named Lee Fields in honor of a West Terre Haute businessman and Rotarian who had spent many years developing recreational facilities and programs for young people in the area.

Lee Fields Park is used mainly by neighborhood children and families, local school baseball and football teams for practice, and joggers. It was remodeled in 2017, providing new basketball court paint and goals, a short trail that encircles the park, a picnic shelter, benches, a small playground, a portable restroom facility, and a parking area.

## GEORGE AND IDA SMITH PARK

Address: 3744 Hotel St., Prairieton, IN 4870

Total Acreage: .50 acres

George and Ida Smith Park is located on State Road 63 in the town of Prairieton in Prairieton Township. The five-tenths of an acre park was donated in December 1976, to the Park Board by Virginia Phelps in memory of her parents, George and Ida Smith.

This park was originally installed as a community-build. It was renovated in 2011 with the help of an Indiana Park and Recreation Association Park Development award. It is a small neighborhood park, serving the surrounding homes and offering an accessible playground with swings, basketball court, shelter, and gardens.



## MARKLE MILL PARK

Address: 4905 N. Mill Dam Rd., Terre Haute, IN 47805

Total Acreage: 8.00 acres

Markle Mill Park is situated on Mill Dam Road on Otter Creek in northern Vigo County. The eight-acre parcel of land was quitclaim deeded to Vigo County on July 27, 1999, by Hulman & Company. In 1816, Colonel Abraham Markle constructed a dam over Otter Creek and built a grist-sawmill. At one time a distillery sat on the site. Only the dam and remnants of the mill foundation remain. The site is a registered historic landmark. It was the desire of the Hulman-George family to have the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department serve as a caretaker of this historic property for the benefit of the community.

Much has been written and is available on the history of the site. The park attracts the general public due to the waterfall over the dam. A gazebo, picnic tables, and a grill are available to visitors. The esthetic qualities of the park draw in fishermen, lunch hour clientele, history enthusiasts, neighbors, and individuals seeking a quiet place. Markle Mill Dam Park received much needed upgrades in 2018–2019, stabilizing the banks of the creek and installing new fencing.





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## R. KERMIT FLESHER MEMORIAL STATE NATURE PRESERVE

Address: Little Rd., Prairie Creek Township

Total Acreage: 36.00 acres

R. Kermit Flesher Memorial State Nature Preserve is a unique flood plain forest located in the bottom land of Prairie Creek Township, just west of the little town of Hutton, not far from the Wabash River. The 36-acre parcel is rectangular in shape and surrounded by agricultural land.

The land was deeded to the Park Board in January 1972, by relatives of Richard Kermit Flesher, who died in April 1971. The family asked that the forest, better known as “Flesher Woods,” be left in its natural state as much as possible, with the exception of educational trails, to preserve all plant life and wildlife.

In April 1984, the Parks and Recreation Department dedicated Flesher Woods to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Thereupon, the woods became a state nature preserve with Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department as its administrator to manage and protect.

Silver maple, green ash, swamp white oak, shagbark, shellbark hickory, and other flood plain species dominate Flesher Woods. In addition, an impressive number of pecan trees and other trees primarily restricted to southwest Indiana, such as the Overcup oak, are located in the woods. Swamp buttercup, which produces yellow flowers in the spring, covers much of the forest floor. Flesher Woods is one of the few remaining high-quality flood plain forests remaining in southwest Indiana.

The area has no trails or other visitor facilities. Access is allowed only by permission of the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department. Flood waters and mosquitoes are problematic. Otherwise, this woodland area offers excellent nature study.

## RUBLE PARK (FORMER PFIZER PROPERTY)

Total Acreage: 822.00 acres

411 East Dallas Drive, Terre Haute, IN 47802

In 2014 the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department acquired this 822-acre parcel. Keith Ruble, former Superintendent of Vigo County Parks and Recreation, played a key part in the acquisition of this property, and it was deemed that the property be named after him. The property runs north of Dallas, East of Trueblood, West of Carlisle, and south of Curry Dr. This property was once used as a buffer between businesses and residential land. All environmental cleanup and remediation was completed within IDEM standards before acquisition of the property. Perpetual maintenance requirements for the land include maintaining environmental caps with no woody vegetation. Annual inspections will be performed by the department to ensure these requirements.

The property will be open to the public in 2020, offering 11 miles of natural hiking trails through grasslands and forests. Ruble Park offers hikers an abundance of wildlife viewing and unique nature programming opportunities are in the works. A partnership with Ivy Tech has allowed for additional parking, access to restroom facilities, and the possibility of additional trail miles. There will also be hunting allowed (bow only) on this property, in select sites and by permit only. Any exception to the “bow only” rule would be youth or military veteran hunts. Only the middle section of the property would close for hunting; this would allow patrons access to many beautiful acres throughout all seasons.

## MAN-MADE, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL FEATURES

### PIONEER VILLAGE AT FOWLER PARK

The pioneer village is the center of attraction for a number of events held annually at the park. The Village Folk, a volunteer group, brings the village alive for the Pancake/Maple Syrup Breakfast, Pioneer Days, and Pioneer Village Christmas Walk. Visitors come from the local area as well as from all over the United States and foreign countries. Thousands of people attend each event. In a joint educational effort, the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department and the Vigo County School Corporation co-sponsor Mini-Pioneer Days each October. All second-grade students participate in the event. Park staff, school personnel, and numerous community volunteers work together to take the students back in time. The village is open on the third Saturday of the month during the summer months for Summer in the Village activities. Tours are given to individuals and groups upon request. The village is frequently the scene of weddings; couples choose the church, gristmill, or the Irishman's covered bridge for their backdrop.

In 1990, the nonprofit organization, Fowler Park Village Folk, was integrated to assist the Parks Department with tours and re-enactors/staffing for special events. Monies raised by this group of volunteers are used solely for educational projects, capital improvements and repairs, acquisitions, and the historic preservation of the pioneer village.

### MARKLE MILL AT MARKLE MILL PARK

Markle Mill was the longest operating gristmill east of the Mississippi River. At one point in time, it was part of the Underground Railroad. The esthetic qualities of the park draw in fishermen, lunch hour visitors, history buffs, neighbors, and individuals seeking a quiet place. (see Markle Mill Park section for more details)



## SUGAR CAMP AT PRAIRIE CREEK PARK

Prairie Creek Park is best known for its Sugar Camp. In January-March, maple trees are tapped in the park and surrounding areas. The sap is collected and routed, using plastic tubing and a pump system, to a holding tank located next to the Sugar Cabin. The Sugar Cabin is an authentic log cabin with evaporating equipment to produce maple syrup. Maple syrup is bottled and made available for purchase. The Sugar Cabin is open to visitors any time a sufficient amount of sap is available to fire the evaporator.



## DEPARTMENT SPECIAL EVENTS, PROGRAMMING, AND SERVICES

### Special Events:

- Bass Unlimited Fishing Rodeo
- Christmas Walk
- Creepy Crawly Fest
- Griffin Bike Park Festival
- Griffin Bike Park Halloween Festival
- Maple Sugarin' Days
- Mini-Pioneer Days
- Movie in the Park
- Pancake Breakfast
- Pioneer Days
- Summer in the Village
- Tour de Park
- Zombie Survival 5K

### Programming:

- Boil the Sugar Down
- Bubbles
- Dolly, Mommy, and Me Tea Party
- Fall Gardening
- Father/Daughter Afternoon
- Frog Hop
- Hooked On Abilities
- iWalk- Backpacking Babies
- iWalk- Early Bird Stroll
- Live Birds of Prey
- Live Reptiles
- Nature Tales

- Night Hike
- Owl Prowl
- Patio Gardening
- Picture Perfect
- Rain Garden Workshop
- Spring Wildflower Hike
- Toddler Trot
- Trailblazers
- Turtle Power
- Wabashiki Wetlands
- Water We Looking For

*Programs adapt to the changing needs of the community and are offered year-round.*

### Services:

- Beach
- Camping
- Educational Tours
- Hunting
- Internships
- Maple Syrup Production and Sales
- Large Event Park Use
- Rentals
- Research
- Speaking Engagements
- Special Events
- Wedding Venues



## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Animal Tales edZOOcation

Apple House, Home of the Blooms Bros.

Chances and Services for Youth Crossroads Events

Ducks Unlimited

IDNR Indiana Master Naturalist

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Indiana Maple Syrup Association

Indiana Park and Recreation Association

Indiana State University

Linton Fire Department McMillan Adult Day Services

National Association of Interpretation

National Recreation and Park Association

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Ouabache Land Conservancy

P&T Carriage Rides

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service, Vigo County

Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College Simple to Elegant

Terre Haute Convention and Visitors Bureau

Terre Haute Parks and Recreation Department

The WILL Center

TREES Inc

Vigo County Health Department

Vigo County Historical Society

Vigo County Public Library

Vigo County School Corporation

Vigo County Soil and Water Conservation District Village Folk

Wabash River Development and Beautification, Inc.

Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission

Wabash Valley Community Foundation

Wabash Valley Herpetological Society

Wabash Valley Master Gardeners Association, Inc.

Wabash Valley Roadrunners

Wal-Mart

West Central Indiana Economic Development District

*The list above does not represent all of Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department partnerships, rather a brief look at the types of partnership that occurred over the years.*

# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department has the utmost concern for proper management of natural resources and conservation practices within the park and recreation area that it operates. One only has to look at the early planning in some of the state and federal parks to visualize the misunderstanding of nature versus recreation. Fragile forested areas were opened and have become overused by picnickers and campers; foot trails and horses have literally caused the roots of trees to be exposed and the soil to be washed away from splash erosion. This could have been prevented, but recreational planners did not know or understand the adverse effects that were to come.

Planning with nature in mind is essential to preserve the natural resources within parks while still providing long term use with little park maintenance. Park professionals and park board members must be good stewards of the land they control if public parks and recreational areas are to survive and flourish. The challenge is to plan and manage park and recreational locations while allowing use by large numbers of people.

Like a good farmer rotates areas, park professionals must consider rotating areas that are overused to prevent erosion and damage to trees and plant life. Facilities that fall in this category include camping, picnic and play areas, plus any other area that is heavily used each year.

Trails must be planned on a contour basis with proper drainage and a base of either compacted sand and gravel or stone to prevent erosion and provide stability.

As a result of proper soil and water practices, the watershed of a park with a lake is protected from soil erosion. The end benefit is better water quality for fishing, swimming, and boating, and an aesthetically pleasing environment.

In planning for the future of park and recreational facilities, the incorporation of proper conservation practices is a must. Both present and future generations are recipients of the benefits of long term use and low maintenance costs.

## NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS OF AWARENESS:

Natural resources are present in many areas within the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department parks system. The following types of areas demand attention:

- Camping
- Prairie Grasses, Grasses, Annual Weeds, and Trees
- Historical and Educational
- Lakes and Ponds
- Picnic Areas, Shelters, and Playgrounds
- State Nature Preserve
- Strip-mined Land
- Trails
- Wetlands
- Woodlands
- Rain Gardens

## AREAS & CONSERVATION PRACTICES:

### CAMPING

The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department supports three camping areas within the parks system.

**Fowler Park campground** covers approximately 9.1 acres. It has both modern sites with electricity and primitive sites. Water is located within easy walking distance. A dump station is available for sewage from self-contained camping units. Shower houses, rest rooms, and a pit toilet for winter use are located nearby. Fowler Park campground is the most popular in the county park system due primarily to its proximity to Fowler Park Lake. Each campsite is on a peninsula just a few feet from the water's edge. Prior to being a camping area, Fowler Park campground was a wooded pasture.

Problem: Soil loss due to soil compaction through high, intensive use. Tree loss due to the shade effect from trees, and a high water table.

Conservation practices: Soil loss due to soil compaction. It is difficult to stop or improve the area from soil compaction, but with a yearly renovation plan of fertilization, seed, mulch, and selective tree removal to allow sunlight penetration, soil loss is held to a minimum. Aeration of the soil when possible is recommended.

Tree loss. As a result of the present conditions, pruning, fertilization, and mulching around existing trees can help some of the trees showing stress. The Parks and Recreation Department has removed dangerous trees and limbs from the area. Trees have been planted to replace those that have been removed. Bald cypress and river birch trees were chosen for planting as they have less leaf litter and better sunlight penetration.

**Hawthorn Park campground** covers approximately 8.1 acres. It has both modern sites with electricity and primitive sites. Water is located within easy walking distance. A dump station is available





for sewage from self-contained camping units. Shower houses and rest rooms, and a pit toilet for winter use are located nearby. The campground is a wooded area in second growth brush and pole timber. Prior to 1950, this area was open and used for farming, but since has grown up in mostly hawthorn, sassafras, elm, pin oak, sliver and red maple, and tulip trees.

Problem: Low level of campground and low areas pocketing water and trees. Compaction in camping areas.

Conservation practice: Unslotted 4" plastic drainage tile has been installed with vertical 6" risers serving as catch basins. Soil cuts have helped funnel the water to the risers. The challenge is to maintain the drainage areas from beavers and debris and the risers and soil pipe from root compaction. Being almost a wooded thicket in areas, no cutting or thinning will be done. This will protect the soil and provide campers privacy. Only dying or dangerous trees are be removed.

**Prairie Creek Park campground** covers approximately 6.5 acres. It has modern sites with electricity and no primitive sites. Water is located within easy walking distance. A dump station is available for sewage from self-contained camping units. Shower houses, rest rooms, and a pit toilet for winter use are located nearby. This area was farmed before becoming a campground. In 1971, trees were planted in the camp site area to provide shade. Kentucky 31 tall fescue was sown to protect the soil.

Problem: Loss of ground cover due to the use of tents. Rutting due to cars parking on soft ground.

Conservation practice: Spot seeding and fertilization are used in high use areas. Parking pads are to be installed when applicable.

### GRASSES, ANNUAL WEEDS, AND TREES

Approximately 85 acres of grass and weed areas exist in the county park system. Mowing usually occurs every two weeks or sooner due to intense public use. Other areas may require only mowing once or twice during the growing season.

Problem: Difficulty keeping areas in grasses and weeds from drying out and becoming bare and subject to erosion. Oncoming threat to Ash tree destruction due to Emerald Ash Borer.

Conservation practices: Grasses and Weeds. A routine renovation of seed and fertilization and mulching each spring and fall. To eliminate the tree shade effect, remove trees with large crowns in high intensive areas to let sufficient sun light penetrate.

*Oncoming Ash tree destruction.* Emerald Ash borer will be preempted by the pro-active, selective removal of Ash trees. Select ash trees will be chemically treated and saved from EAB.

### HISTORICAL AND EDUCATIONAL

Approximately 172 acres of Vigo County parkland is used for historical and educational interpretation. They primarily include Fowler Park's Pioneer Village and Prairie Creek Park's sugar camp.

Problem: Maintaining the originality that reflects a historically accurate representation.

Conservation practice: These areas require a good sod due to heavy use at times. Special plants are protected by mulch and, in some areas, a split rail fence. Only native plant materials are used in these areas.





## LAKES AND PONDS

Lakes and ponds comprise approximately 141 acres of area in the Vigo County parks system. There are two lakes in Fowler Park and one lake and five ponds in the Fowler Park Wilderness Area. Prairie Creek Park has one lake and one pond. On Hawthorn Park property there are two lakes and one pond.

Problem: In the summer at times, lakes and ponds in the system are weedy with submersed aquatic plants, algae, and goose droppings. The goose droppings cause the ecoli count to soar, making it dangerous for swimmers. Prairie Creek Park Lake is filling with sediments from neighboring fields and is well on its way to becoming a wetland area.

Conservation practice: Watershed protection is essential to properly maintain good water quality in the lakes and ponds in the Vigo County parks system. The watersheds that empty into the water areas in the parks system are primarily privately controlled. Good communication with land owners is necessary to improve water quality. The use of selective herbicides reduces the amount of weeds and algae. A minimum of one staff member is a Certified Pesticide Applicator. It is not good to eliminate all weeds and algae. Some areas are left for the protection and food of fish and wildlife. In some lakes, Canada Geese have become a nuisance due to the fecal material left on the land and deposited in the lake. To help control the population, the park department addles eggs during nesting season and conducts goose harvests. The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department is registered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct these activities. The park department has a good working relationship with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Division of Fish and depends on their guidance to help improve the lakes and ponds. The assistance stocking fish and with aquatic weed analysis are invaluable services to the Department.

### **PICNIC AREAS, SHELTERS, AND PLAYGROUNDS**

The Parks and Recreation Department has numerous picnic sites and eight picnic shelters. The demand for shelters and picnic tables is increasing.

Problem: Keeping highly-used picnic sites in grass.

Conservation practice: Annually, each fall, seeding, fertilizing, and moving picnic tables to different locations. In areas where it is impossible to keep grass, building frames and filling them with compaction gravel is utilized.

### **STATE NATURE PRESERVE**

One wooded area that is unique in the Vigo County parks system is the R. Kermit Fleisher State Nature Preserve. This nature preserve is the only high quality flood plain forest in Vigo County. Its unique qualities include pecan trees, overcup oak, green ash, and swamp butter cup, which produce yellow flowers in the spring covering much of the forest floor.

Problem: The forest floods, possesses a large mosquito population, and has extensive poison ivy vines within its boundaries. It is a sensitive area and subject to damage if used without authorization.

Conservation practice: The public may walk through the nature preserve; however, the public is not encouraged to go to the preserve in the summertime.

### **STRIP-MINED LAND**

Approximately 360 acres of Vigo County parkland was mined for coal during the 1950s. Since the mining, Peabody Coal Company has planted trees including red and white pine, sycamore, oak, walnut, sweet gum, tulip, black alder, bald cypress, black locust, and Chinese chestnut, on virtually all areas of mined ground. However, the majority of the trees in these areas are cottonwood, a species that is natural to the area.

Problem: Erosion along road ditches is causing culverts, ditches, and some lakes to fill with sediment. In some areas, the public furthers the problem by climbing up the steep banks disturbing the natural vegetation holding the soil in place. Most areas where the ground was strip mined are wooded and provide little food for wildlife.

Conservation practice: In the areas where the public furthers the problem, a fertilization and seed program is used along with natural barriers. In other areas, selected plot cuttings need to be done to encourage the return of food producing weeds and food producing shrubs for wildlife food.



## TRAILS

There is approximately 25 miles of trails in the Vigo County parks system. The trails are used by a variety of people. Some want to enjoy nature and others are using the trails for exercise. The fully accessible trail located in Hawthorn Park is asphalted. Other than that one, there are two types of trails in the parks. At Hawthorn Park and Prairie Creek Park, the trails are compacted aggregate. At Fowler Park and the Fowler Park Wilderness Area, the trails are sod. A trail, laid on top of an old AG levee at Wabashiki State Fish and Wildlife Area serves as a great viewing area for wetland species. The new Ruble Park, named after long time Superintendent Keith Ruble, will have approximately 10 miles of natural hiking trails, bringing a Turkey Rub style trail to Vigo County. Former Fowler Park Wilderness Area covers approximately 300 acres. A continuous trail system was made several years ago with the help of J. I. Case Company, this was the platform for what is now the Griffin Bike Park. As it stands today, there are currently 18 miles of trail built for all abilities, for beginner to expert. As it stands today, there are currently 18 miles of trail built for all abilities, for beginner to expert. Seven of those miles are on Otter Creek and nine are on the Wabash River. Seven of those miles are on Otter Creek and nine are on the Wabash River. Additional spots along Otter Creek and the Wabash River may be used to put in or take out canoes. Picnic and camping sites may be set up along the route if an easement can be obtained from adjacent land owners.

Problems: Gravel trails are most advantageous due to their ability to carry heavy loads without cutting ruts, but on slope areas they are a problem due to erosion. Sod trails are aesthetically more attractive; however, when sod trails are overused (particularly by horseback riders), soil erosion is a problem, especially when the soil is soft due to rain or thawing. Log jams and debris in Otter Creek and the Wabash River are commonplace.

Conservation practices:

*Land Trails.* All trails in the park system are planned on a contour basis and mostly graveled due to their heavy use. In areas where

there are slopes, diversion bars are created using railroad ties or treated 4x4's to slow down erosion. Fertilizer, seed, and mulch are applied to keep soil loss to a minimum each year where needed.

*River Trails.* Annually, and as additionally required, remove log jams and debris to keep the stream open.

## WETLANDS

Approximately 883 acres comprises both J.I. Case Wildlife Refuge and county-owned portions of Wabashiki State Fish and Wildlife Area.

Problems: When flooding occurs due to high rainfall, the negative effects include trail erosion/structural integrity of levees, deposits of sand and silt over trails, and flooding also brings trash over the trail. Constructing trails systems that are fully accessible. Constructing recreational trails that don't disturb wildlife.

Conservation practices:

*Trail Erosion.* Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department attempts to minimize/eliminate hazardous trees that can be uprooted and damage trails and levees or harm trail users. An additional practice can include removing invasive Asian bush honeysuckle and spray with an approved herbicide to provide adequate sunlight to grow more desirable grasses.

*Deposit of sand and silt over trails.* In the low areas of the wetlands, sand and silt can be pushed off asphalt trails with a machine and hosed off.

*Deposit of trash due to flooding.* Many volunteer groups are available for trash clean up. In addition, park staff monitor areas and pick up refuse when possible.

*Trails.* Trails are thoughtfully designed to not disturb wildlife that occupy the areas. Trails use existing levees and roads that have already been established. New trails will not be placed in undisturbed area. The topography determines the ability to place a fully accessible trail.



## WOODLANDS

Uplands and lowlands cover approximately 582 acres of Vigo County parkland. Most of the wooded acreage in the park system is in second growth timber. Almost every type of tree found in Indiana can be found growing at one or more of the park areas.

Problems: People make their own trails which results in erosion. Trees are cut for firewood, carved in, or hacked with an axe simply for amusement. The health of Sugar Maple trees used for the Maple Syrup production can be easily damaged. The damage/death of ash trees due to Emerald Ash Borer will soon be a reality in Vigo County.

Conservation practices:

*Man-Made Trails.* In areas where the public has made its own trail, the trail is improved with protective measures or eliminated if it is in a sensitive area with natural debris.

Communication lines must be opened to campers.

*Tree Destruction.* Written educational information on the value and treatment of woodlands is helpful in gaining cooperation to protect the wooded areas.

*Sugar Maple Trees.* In 1980 and 1981, selected young maple trees benefited when the forest around them was thinned to encourage their survival and crown growth. The annual tapping of maple trees is similar to giving blood; as long as the tree is not over tapped, the vigor or growth of the tree is not affected. Taps are placed no more than six inches from any previous tap on the tree. No more than two 5/16" taps are placed in trees 18" or more in diameter breast height (DBH). This is conservative and keeps the trees healthy. In any given year, it is estimated that only 15% of the total liquid food value of the tree will be given up. When spring comes and leaves grow back, this food content is replenished.



*Emerald Ash Borer.* With the impending reality that all ash trees will succumb to the deadly effects of the Emerald Ash Borer within the next 5 years, Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department will enact a pro-active approach to the situation. A strategic plan includes determining which trees to remove, in what order trees should be removed, and what species of tree should replace the trees removed. The intent of the plan is to first, preemptively predict safety concerns and resolve them, and second, to slowly remove ash trees and plant new trees to maintain shade cover in highly used areas. In areas that are needed, Vigo County Parks and Recreation will treat approximately 75 ash at Fowler Park, 12 at Prairie Creek, and 30 at Hawthorn Park.

Fowler was started in 2014, Prairie Creek and Hawthorn in 2015. These treatments will then be done every other year until the infestation has subsided and then watched closely.





## ADDITIONAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES:

### FISH

Vigo County park's lakes and ponds all are stocked and well managed. The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department has a cooperative arrangement with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife for the management and protection of all bodies of water for the enjoyment of the public. Every year or two, the State Biologist from Avoca State Fish Hatchery inventories and makes recommendations for each body of water to maintain optimal fishing. This might be to release specific or several species in the lakes or eliminate all life in a lake if the fish are stunted and fish levels are low. Through a cooperative agreement, the professional Fish Biologist can and has recommended ways to better maintain and protect fish for the public enjoyment.

In 2019, the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department underwent a complete fish renovation at Ruble Lake at Fowler Park. Nuisance Shad had overtaken the lake, with the average size being too large for consumption of most advantageous fish. Through studies performed on the lake, it was confirmed that fish populations were both down, and stunted. The best option, with the aide of the state, was to do a complete renovation to be finished by November 2019.

Fish present in Vigo County parks:

*Fowler Park Lake (including the strip-mined lake)* – largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, black crappie.

*Fowler Park Wilderness (large lake)* – largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, crappie.

*Fowler Park Wilderness (small lakes)* – largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish.

*Hawthorn Park, J. I. Case Wetland Wildlife Refuge (lake)* – largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, black crappie, yellow bullheads, warmouth.

*Hawthorn Park, (Burns Lake)* – largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, crappie.

*Prairie Creek Park (lake and pond)* – largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, black crappie.

*Ruble Park (east and west ponds)* – largemouth bass, bluegill, rock bass.

## WILDLIFE

Vigo County parks have always had an abundant number of all kinds of native wildlife. Several types of habitat that provide homes for all kinds of birds and animals are maintained by the department. Birds of all kinds: songbirds, woodpeckers, shorebirds, predator birds, and migratory birds, are common in the parks. Mammals are also plentiful, but are rarely seen as many of them are nocturnal. Found in the parks are white-tailed deer, fox and flying squirrels, red and gray fox, coyote, mink, muskrat, opossum, skunk, beaver, and other small mammals.

There are three basic needs of wildlife. These include suitable habitat, food, and water. To improve wildlife habitat and propagation, the following recommendations are observed:

### Fowler Park:

1. In strip mined areas, small clear cuts of trees are executed to encourage native weeds and plants to reintroduce themselves.
2. Food producing wildlife shrubs are planted in these areas and other open areas.
3. Artificial nesting boxes are provided in upland / wetland areas.
4. Large areas are left undisturbed.
5. Invasive species removal

### Prairie Creek Park:

1. Food producing wildlife shrubs are planted.
2. Artificial nesting boxes are provided in upland / wetland areas.
3. Large areas are left undisturbed.
4. Maintain prairie/wildflower plantings at the park existing.
5. Invasive species removal

### Hawthorn Park:

1. Food producing wildlife shrubs are planted.
2. Artificial nesting boxes are provided in upland / wetland areas.
3. Large areas are left undisturbed.
4. Invasive species removal

## NUISANCE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

### Canada geese:

When the J. I. Case Wetland Wildlife Refuge was built at Hawthorn Park, it was wonderful to see Canada geese using this facility. No one ever dreamt that these geese would become a real problem mainly due to their fecal droppings left everywhere. The Parks and Recreation Department had real problems at the beaches until the geese were fenced out and people were asked not to feed them; doing this did not stop the problems. The water quality of the lakes was being contaminated and fecal coliform counts were unacceptable. Geese also caused problems in the camping and picnic areas due to people wanting to feed them. These geese called, Grand Canada, are a subspecies from Minnesota that do not migrate and like to be around people.

Goose counts of around 30 at Fowler Park and 150 at Hawthorn Park prompted the Parks and Recreation Department to seek the advice of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Biologist, Roger Stonebreaker. His advice, since hunting was not allowed in the parks, was to trap the geese during molting season. Over two years, the department trapped birds and they were transported to fish and wildlife areas. This was only a temporary fix. The Superintendent annually applies for a permit to addle eggs during the nesting season. This is successful and reduces the number of geese in the parks.

Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department has, in the past, allowed hunters to harvest at Hawthorn Park. Hunting was recommended by the IDNR wildlife biologist. Having a hunt in a county park was very controversial. There were several articles in the local paper and several people who objected to a hunt. After much discussion, the Vigo County Parks Board gave the okay for the hunts, also known as harvests. This will be done as needed. The professional assistance of Roger Stonebreaker, was again greatly appreciated by the Department.

Hunting provides a great recreational activity for many local hunters. They have expressed appreciation for the county Parks Board. The number of geese is still high, and the Department has encouraged other land owners to allow hunting to drop the numbers of geese.

**Beavers:**

Beavers are opportunistic mammals that will quickly take advantage of new habitats of water and trees. They completely cut down or girdle every living tree or shrub within close proximity to water. They create pools of water by building wood retention dams so that more food can be accessible by water. Once the food supply is exhausted, they move to where food is plentiful again. After several years, when new trees and brush come back, the beavers reappear. This cycle is repeated over and over. The loss of trees and shrubs in marsh areas is not as noticeable as trees cut in upland areas. The damages caused by beavers are the aesthetic loss of trees and shrubs, the annual replacement cost in dollars, and the years required to replace them.

To keep the number of beavers down, state wildlife biologists have recommended trapping. There are four methods available for the task.

1. Leghold trap - A steel trap that secures the leg and usually results in the drowning of the animal after being caught.
2. Snare - A woven wire loop that the beaver swims or walks through.
3. Conibear trap No. 330- A trap that collapses around the body and kills the animal.
4. Live trap - This method catches the animal alive so it can be released in a new location. These traps are very expensive.

Of the four methods, the Conibear trap is preferred. It humanely kills the animal and can be used in many different locations.

To be proactive, the Parks and Recreation Department uses chicken wire and 3/8" steel rods around cypress trees to prevent beavers from damaging the trees. Annual inspection of the trees is

important to see if the wire is secure around each tree and not too tight. As long as beavers are in the park lakes, the Department must protect trees in or close to the water.

**Muskrats:**

Like beavers, muskrats like new habitats and quickly take advantage of available food. Muskrats eat green vegetation, berries, cattails, twigs, corn, and other farm crops. They even eat snails, the meat from carcasses, and the plants that make up the insides of their own houses. Muskrats dig dens around the edge of ponds and lakes. If stepped on, the den caves in and may cause an individual to break a leg or fall in the water which could result in drowning. Muskrat dens have caused drivers and mowing machines, on two occasions in the Vigo County parks, to end up in the lake when the bank collapsed. Muskrats are also hazardous to earthen dams. The burrowing in these structures may weaken the dam and eventually result in the loss of the dam if preventative measures are not used.

The methods of control are the same as for beavers. Of the four, the Conibear body trap No. 110 is preferred. This trap is humane and is placed to prevent non-targeted animals or birds from entering the trap. Trapping is completed annually.

The Park and Recreation Department has prevented muskrats from using the lake shores by putting stone rip rap on them and eliminating cattails. The use of the chemical Rodeo has been very effective. Keeping grass cut on dams has also been an excellent deterrent.

**Groundhogs (woodchucks):**

Groundhogs seem to build the best dens of all terrestrial animals. Their dens are used by many other animals. Groundhogs are not a problem in most cases except when they den in lakes or pond dams. Dams are mowed annually to discourage burrowing. When and if they become a problem, the department uses cyanide bombs to gas all the groundhogs in the den. The hole is solidly filled with soil and seeded in the fall or spring.

#### White-tailed deer:

Deer are protected in the county parks. The numbers of deer are being kept down due to the hunting pressure around the parks in most cases. A few of the county parks have annual deer damage where tree seedlings are being eaten and antler rubs are found on deciduous trees and conifers. The Department works with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Biologist to determine deer management practices.

#### **MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCTION**

One of nature's sweetest resources is the sweet sap (sugar water) that comes from the Sugar Maple tree (*Acer Sacerium*). Man has been utilizing this tree for over 300 years to sweeten his foods. A small sugar camp was started at Prairie Creek Park in 1977. Maple syrup is produced primarily for the historical benefit of Vigo County citizens and visitors. Tours can be given to elementary school classes, private schools, senior groups, the general public, and anyone else with an interest. In February, an annual pancake and sausage breakfast featuring the locally produced maple syrup is held at Fowler Park Log Barn. This event attracts people from all over the area. Many take time, before or after the breakfast, to tour the Sugar Camp at Prairie Creek Park and purchase syrup to take home for themselves or for gifts.

#### **NATURE AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION/RESEARCH**

It is important that the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department play a primary role in the education, development, and programming of natural resources' tours for the children and adults of Vigo County. To be most effective, this service is often done in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Office, the Soil Conservation Department, the Vigo County School Corporation, and community professionals. The department works with all groups, young and old, who request nature tours or need a speaker.



#### **RESEARCH**

The parks are available per request for student or professional research.



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## THE PLAN

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### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The 2020-2024 Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan utilized a comprehensive public participation process, conducted between August 2019 through January 2020, to determine department needs and priorities. The needs analysis draws from the results of the various public input strategies, including a community survey (offered online and in print), community meetings, stakeholder focus groups, meetings with department staff, and a public presentation including a public comment period.

Park needs and concrete actions are outlined in the strategic action section of this master plan. Three main themes developed as public participation came to a close:

1. Improvements and Maintenance of Assets
2. Community-Driven Programming
3. Staffing and Operations Management

The Strategic Action section of the plan outlines realistic, measurable, and timebound strategic actions that help meet the goals of the 2020-2024 Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan. As outlined in the Master Plan Summary section, a formal needs analysis and assessment of all public input and park properties was conducted and is represented within the three themes.

The following sections outline a high-level summary and details of the five public engagement efforts:

1. Community Survey
2. Community Meetings
3. Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings
4. Meetings with Department Staff
5. Public Comment Summary







## 1. COMMUNITY SURVEY

### DISTRIBUTION

Print: Beginning in August of 2019 (through September 2019), paper copies of the community survey were made available in the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department Administrative Office. Copies were also available at the Fowler and Hawthorn Park gatehouses and distributed during various programming events, as well as during 2019 Pioneer Days activities.

Web: A link to the survey was posted on the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department website, on Department Facebook and Instagram pages, and distributed to the public through the department's stakeholders, including:

- Bass Unlimited
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- Indiana State University
- Ivy Tech Community College
- Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
- Southern Indiana Cooperative Invasive Management
- Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce
- Tribune Star Newspaper
- United Way of the Wabash Valley
- Various contractors used by the department
- Vigo County employees
- Vigo County Public Library
- Vigo County School Corporation
- Wabash Valley Community Foundation
- West Central Indiana Economic Development District
- WTWO-TV
- WTHI-TV

### NUMBER OF SURVEYS COLLECTED

Total: 379 (including 88 printed surveys & 291 online surveys)

## COMMUNITY SURVEY: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The community would like to see **MORE WALKING TRAILS/PATHS**.

*Which aligns with the activities they do most in the parks:*

**Walking for pleasure**

**Cycling for pleasure**

**Hiking and backpacking**

**Nature walks**

When asked to allocate funding among competing categories, the community identified the following:

**1st - Improve quality of existing parks**

2nd - New aquatic features at existing multi-purpose county parks

3rd - Improve quality of existing trails

4th - Trail development (additional)

**The community is a bit split on how to pay for new amenities.**

When asked how to pay for new park amenities the community responded:

**46.3% Use existing budget**

12.6% Municipal bonds

4.6% New taxes/fees

**39.3% All of the above** (existing budget, municipal bonds & new taxes/fees)

The community is **willing to pay for park improvements** through:

**Small increases in programming fees (56.8%)**

**Small increases in shelter reservations (54.4%)**

**Small yearly county park user tax (13.3%)**

Overwhelmingly, the community rates the **quality of activities, programs, and special events** provided by the department as **"Very Good" or "Satisfactory,"** indicating there is room for some new opportunities.

Of community respondents

**96.4% rated the importance of natural space VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT.**

The Vigo County community cares about parks!

When **asked why they don't participate in Vigo County Parks Programming,** the #1 response was:

Not aware of programs

Overwhelmingly, the community believes that **Social Media: Facebook, Twitter & Instagram** is the best way to receive parks information.

When asked **why they don't use Vigo County Parks**, community members said:

**No time**

**Too far away/inconveniently located**


**Don't know what is available/don't think of them**

The majority of respondents (53.8%) **identified the upkeep and maintenance of existing parks as "Good"**, indicating there is an opportunity to maintain existing parks at a higher level.

*A summary of all survey responses is included in Appendix D: Community Survey Results*



**COMMUNITY SURVEY:**



**VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION  
 MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**Park Use:**

**1. How often do you use the Vigo County Parks?**


- Every day
- 4 or 5 times a week
- 3 or fewer times a week
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice a year
- Never

**2. Which county parks, trails, facilities have you or a member of your household visited in the past year? (Please check all that apply):**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Fowler Park:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Campgrounds</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Pioneer Village</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Park trails</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Ruble Lake</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Playgrounds</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Picnic shelters</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Log Barn</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Prairie Creek Park</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Campgrounds</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Trails</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Elliott Woods Natural Area Trails</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Picnic shelters</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Sugar Cabin / Sugar Camp</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Griffin Bike Park</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Dewey Point</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Wabashiki Trail</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Hawthorn Park &amp; J.I. Case Wetland Wildlife Refuge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Campgrounds</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Trails</li> <li><input type="radio"/> J.I. Case Observation Deck</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Kenneth E. Smith Memorial Labyrinth and Meditation Garden</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Playground</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Fishing Piers</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Picnic Shelters</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Archery Field</li> <li><input type="radio"/> National Trail access trail</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Lee Fields Park</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>South Seventh Street Park</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Markle Mill Park</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>George and Ida Smith Park (Prairieton Park)</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>R. Kermit Flesher Memorial State Nature Preserve</b></li> </ul>
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**3. How would you rate the general upkeep and maintenance of the existing Vigo County parks?**

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Don't know



**VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION  
 MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**4. What are the primary reasons that you use Vigo County parks?**

<input type="radio"/> Enjoy the outdoors or nature	<input type="radio"/> Camping
<input type="radio"/> Walk, hike or bike for exercise	<input type="radio"/> Historical or cultural attractions
<input type="radio"/> Play sports	<input type="radio"/> Attend programs or special events
<input type="radio"/> Participate in family activities	<input type="radio"/> Fishing
<input type="radio"/> Use specific park rental facilities	<input type="radio"/> Don't use parks
<input type="radio"/> Meet friends	<input type="radio"/> Other: _____
<input type="radio"/> Birding/Wildlife Observation	

**5. If you seldom use or do not use Vigo County parks, what are your reasons? (Please check your top 2 choices):**


<input type="radio"/> Too far away/ not conveniently located	<input type="radio"/> Do not have transportation
<input type="radio"/> Don't know where they are	<input type="radio"/> Poorly maintained
<input type="radio"/> Too crowded	<input type="radio"/> No time
<input type="radio"/> Not interested	<input type="radio"/> Lack of facilities
<input type="radio"/> Feel unsafe	<input type="radio"/> Don't know what's available
<input type="radio"/> Other: _____	

**6. How would you rate the importance of natural open space to the community? (Please check only one)**

- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not important at all
- Don't know

**7. I would like to see the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department add the following things to our county parks (Please check all that apply):**

- More accessible play equipment and facilities
- More walking trails/paths
- More benches/shelters/gathering areas
- More youth programs/activities
- More adult programs/activities



**VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION  
 MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**Program and Activities:**

**8. How often do you attend programs, activities or special events offered by Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department?**

<input type="radio"/> Every day	<input type="radio"/> Once or twice a month
<input type="radio"/> 4 or 5 times a week	<input type="radio"/> Once or twice a year
<input type="radio"/> 3 or fewer times a week	<input type="radio"/> Never

**9. What are the most convenient program times for you and others in your household?**


<input type="radio"/> Weekday mornings	<input type="radio"/> Weekend mornings
<input type="radio"/> Weekday afternoons	<input type="radio"/> Weekend afternoons
<input type="radio"/> Weekday evenings	<input type="radio"/> Weekend evenings

**10. If you do not participate in park programs or special events offered by Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department, what are your reasons?**

<input type="radio"/> Not aware of programs	<input type="radio"/> Need child care in order to participate
<input type="radio"/> Too busy / no time	<input type="radio"/> Poor quality of programs
<input type="radio"/> Don't have activities I'm interested in	<input type="radio"/> Held at inconvenient locations
<input type="radio"/> Held at inconvenient times	<input type="radio"/> Not accessible for people with disabilities
<input type="radio"/> Too expensive	<input type="radio"/> Lack of transportation

**11. The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department offers or co-sponsors the special events listed below. Please check ALL the special events that you and/ or members of your household have attended in the past 24 months:**

<input type="radio"/> Pioneer Days	<input type="radio"/> Summer in the Village
<input type="radio"/> Christmas Walk	<input type="radio"/> Bass Unlimited Fishing Rodeo
<input type="radio"/> Maple Sugarin' Days Scavenger Hunt	<input type="radio"/> Tour de Parks
<input type="radio"/> Griffin Bike Park Festival	<input type="radio"/> Pancake Breakfast
<input type="radio"/> Creepy Crawly Fest	<input type="radio"/> Family Fishing Skills Clinic
<input type="radio"/> Movie in the Park	<input type="radio"/> Griffin Bike Park Halloween Festival



**VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION  
 MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**12. Select the 5 activities you would like to do most. Assume you have the time, money and transportation to do whichever 5 activities you want.**

<input type="radio"/> Walking for pleasure	<input type="radio"/> Fishing	<input type="radio"/> Soccer
<input type="radio"/> Cycling for pleasure	<input type="radio"/> Fairs and festivals	<input type="radio"/> Basketball
<input type="radio"/> Hiking / Backpacking	<input type="radio"/> Beach activities	<input type="radio"/> Jogging / running
<input type="radio"/> Swimming	<input type="radio"/> Gardening	<input type="radio"/> Photography
<input type="radio"/> Camping	<input type="radio"/> Wildlife watching	<input type="radio"/> Arts and crafts
<input type="radio"/> Nature walks	<input type="radio"/> Baseball / softball	<input type="radio"/> Picnicking
<input type="radio"/> Dog walking	<input type="radio"/> Cornhole	<input type="radio"/> Bird watching / feeding
<input type="radio"/> Reading for pleasure	<input type="radio"/> Pickleball	<input type="radio"/> Kayaking / canoeing
<input type="radio"/> Playground visits/ play	<input type="radio"/> Tennis	<input type="radio"/> Boating
<input type="radio"/> Exercising / Aerobics	<input type="radio"/> Archery	<input type="radio"/> Woodworking
<input type="radio"/> Attend Concerts	<input type="radio"/> Golf	<input type="radio"/> Historical reenactments
<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify):		

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**13. How would you rate the activities, programs and special events provided by Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department?**

- Excellent. There are many opportunities to do all or most of the activities and programs I enjoy.
- Very Good. There are several opportunities to do many of the recreation activities and programs I enjoy.
- Satisfactory. There are some opportunities to do the recreation activities and programs I enjoy.
- Not very good. There are a few opportunities to do the recreation activities and programs I enjoy.
- Totally inadequate. There are no opportunities to do any of the recreation activities and programs I enjoy.
- Not sure. I don't know what is offered.

VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION  
 MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS



**14. What additional recreation programs do you feel the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department should offer or expand? (Please select all that apply)**

- Outdoor/ Environmental programs
- Fitness classes (aerobics, yoga, etc.)
- Sports (kickball, ultimate Frisbee, disc golf, etc.)
- Special events (concerts in the parks, movies, festivals, tournaments, etc.)
- Arts (painting in the parks, drama, music, etc.)
- Outdoor recreation tournaments (cornhole, basketball, beach volleyball)
- Individual or team adventure races
- No additional programs are needed
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**15. What is the best way for your household to receive information on parks and recreation facilities, services and programs? (Check all that apply):**

- County website
- From friend or word of mouth
- Park bulletin boards
- Park Board or County Council meetings
- Newspaper
- Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- Other online sites
- Television
- Radio
- Posters/ flyers / banners
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION  
 MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS



**Park Funding**

**16. If additional funding were available for Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department to fund CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT of parks and trails, how would you allocate the funding among the competing categories below? Enter as much or as little as you wish for each category, but please make your total allocation equal 100%.**

Category	% Allocation
Improve quality of existing parks	
Improve quality of existing trails	
LAND (acquisition only) for Park Development	
Purchase of land (easements) for preservation of open space	
Nature Center (addition to one of the existing county parks)	
Dog Park or off leash area (addition to existing county park(s))	
Trail development (additional)	
Making existing play areas accessible	
Programming	
Improvements to existing campgrounds	
New aquatic features (i.e. splash pads) at existing multi-purpose county parks	
Other (Please describe)	

**17. After first applying for all available grants and donations, how would you like Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department to pay for new amenities in the parks?**

- Use existing budget
- New taxes/fees
- Municipal Bonds
- All the above

**18. Are you willing to pay for improvements in Vigo County parks using any of the following methods?**

- (Check all that apply):*
- Yes, small increase in program fees
  - No, can't afford to pay anything for parks
  - Yes, small increase in shelter reservations
  - No, unwilling to pay anything for parks
  - Yes, small yearly county park user tax

VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION  
MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS



**Questions About You:**

19. Do you live, work or go to school in Vigo County? (Choose all that apply):

- Resident of Vigo County
- Work in Vigo County
- I am a college student attending a college or university in Vigo County
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

20. Please input your current residential zip code?

\_\_\_\_\_

21. Please write the total number of people in your household (including children) within each age category in the table below. This helps us plan for parks needs based on who is using or may use the parks and facilities. *Number of household members:*

_____ 0 - 5 years	_____ 26-36 years	_____ 70-80 years
_____ 6-10 years	_____ 37-47 years	_____ 81-91 years
_____ 1-16 years	_____ 48-58 years	_____ 92-100+
_____ 17-25 years	_____ 59-69 years	

22. What gender do you most identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

23. What is your employment status?

- Unemployed
- Retired
- Employed part-time
- Employed full-time

VIGO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION  
MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS



24. What is your approximate household income (total income of all employed contributing members of household):

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,001 to \$40,000
- \$40,001 to 60,000
- \$60,000 to \$80,000
- Over \$80,000
- No answer



25. Comments/ Suggestions relating to improvements, programming, accessibility, special events, campgrounds, volunteerism, rentals & reservations etc.:

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AUGUST 7<sup>TH</sup> FOWLER PARK LOG BARN 6:30 PM. 1<sup>ST</sup> PUBLIC MEETING FOR PUBLIC INPUT:  
 AUGUST 20<sup>TH</sup> HAWTHORN PARK 11:00 A.M.-12:30 P.M. 2<sup>ND</sup> PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

## 2. COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Three community input meetings were held in 2019 and advertised through the department’s website, social media accounts, and local TV channel. The locations and times of public input meetings are below:

- Wednesday, August 7 at Fowler Park Log Barn, 6:30pm–8:00pm  
Attendees (24): Leo Frey, Barbara Lambertus, Ronnie Gillin, Suzanne Kriebel, Jan Buffington, Stacy Cook, Russell Cook, Courtney Johnson, Michael Shaw, Kent Harris, Carmen DeWitt, Terry Woodward, Carol Newlin, Wil Newlin, Jeff Kriebel, Sam Ligget, Jo Ligget, Clint Griffin, Gene Griffin, Doug Griffin, Bob Bruce, Danielle Schalbry, Jennifer Browne, Kevin R
- Tuesday, August 20 at Hawthorn Park, 11:00am–12:30pm  
Attendees (16): Ron Gillin, Jill Brady, Becky Klass, Bill Klass, Denise Duggan, John Glazner, Fred Nation, Muriel Spitler, Donna Williams, Charlie Williams, Dan Bradley, Lorrie Herber, Jim Everett, Randi Everett, Carolyn Callecod, Dan Callecod
- Wednesday, September 4 at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, 6pm-7:30pm  
Attendees (7): Kyle Walsh, Ronda Beecroft, Susan Dolle, St. Mary-of-the Woods College representative, St. Mary-of-the Woods College representative 2, St. Mary-of-the Woods College representative 3, Mike Shaw

The meetings were facilitated by Superintendent Adam Grossman. They were well attended by community members and special interest groups (47 people total). The agenda below was followed for public input meetings, allowing time for questions and comments:

1. Introductions
2. The master planning process
3. Major department accomplishments in the past 5 years
4. Questions asked of the community:
  - Where do you believe we have room for growth? Improvement?
  - How can VCPRD serve the community better?

### COMMUNITY MEETINGS: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Would like to see more family-oriented and group-oriented programming and activities offered
- Would like to see maintenance of current parks as a priority (vegetation management & facilities) – especially Hawthorn Park, Markle Mill Dam, and the newly acquired Erie Canal Lock property
- Would like to see more attention given to the parks by local government officials
- Would like to see more access to parks in the northern portion of the county
- Would like to see more volunteer engagement from community groups, friends’ groups, and college students
- Enjoy current trails, would like to see more trail connections and opportunities to engage in trail clean-up
- Noted confusion between City and County park systems
- Identified a lack of marketing and coordinated efforts in helping community know about park amenities and programming

*Complete meeting notes from community input sessions can be found in Appendix E: Community Meetings*

### 3. STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Three stakeholder focus group meetings were hosted in October 2019 and facilitated by the master plan contracting provider, Collaborative Training Network. These groups were comprised of partners and collaborators of the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department. In early October, 34 stakeholders received invitations to attend the meetings held at the following dates and locations:

Monday, October 28 at Vigo County Government Offices, 5pm–6:30pm

- Stakeholder Attendees (6): Abby (Vigo County Parks Board), Carol (Bass Unlimited), Mark (Park User, Media Representative), Russell (Heavy Equipment Contractor for Vigo Parks), Amber (Southern Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management), LeAnn (Ivy Tech)
- Department Attendees: Adam (Superintendent), Brian (Assistant Superintendent), Laura (Natural Resources Coordinator), Michaela (Administrative Assistance)

Tuesday, October 29 at Fowler Park, 12:00pm–1:30pm

- Stakeholder Attendees (10): Roni (Vigo County Health Department), Amy (Vigo County Library), Kendra (Vigo County Library), Nancy (Indiana State University/Riverscape), Gene (Friends of Griffin Bike Park), Clint (Friends of Griffin Bike Park), Jeremy (West Central Indiana Economic Development District), Michael (Riverscape), Jan (Vigo County Soil and Water), Scott (Indiana Department of Natural Resources)
- Department Attendees: Adam (Superintendent), Brian (Assistant Superintendent), Laura (Natural Resources Coordinator), Rich (Griffin Bike Park Manager)

The following agenda was followed for each Stakeholder Focus Group meeting:

*Introductions (Vigo Superintendent)*

*Department accomplishments since the last master plan (Vigo Superintendent)*

*Focus group questions (Collaborative Training Network)*

*1) In the community survey, the results indicate that the community would like to see more walking trails/paths (more than any other amenities). This also aligns with the community's response that the activities they do most in the parks are:*

*Walking for pleasure*

*Cycling for pleasure*

*Hiking and Backpacking*

*Nature Walks*

*What are your opinions on expanding the available walking trails and paths?*

*Would you see this meeting your agency needs as well?*

*2) With limited and competing funds, the Parks Department and Board have tough decisions to make about priorities for funding.*

*Knowing that resources are limited, do you see it more important (in the next 5 years) to maintain what assets already exists (to a high standard) or acquire new assets (to meet additional needs)?*

*3) The community is consistent in what they want to see more of, from all angles. In the community survey we asked community members to assign allocation (equaling 100%) to the types of*

services they want to see MORE of - here is the breakdown of the 4 items with the highest allocations (in rank order, with highest at top):

*Improve quality of existing parks*

*New aquatic features (i.e. splash pads) at existing multi-purpose county parks*

*Improve quality of existing trails*

*Trail Development (additional)*

*Other items ranked were nowhere near these items. Do you all agree, and see a similar priority for these items?*

*Or do you see other entities offering these items to the Vigo County community?*

*4) In terms of programming, overwhelmingly, the community asked that more Special Events and Outdoor/Environmental programming should be expanded.*

*Do you agree? Do you see other ways the department can meet your agency's and the community's needs?*

*5) Stewarding and maintaining over 2,600 acres, 10+ full time staff, and a million dollar+ budget is a big responsibility. If you were in charge of the parks department--*

*What would you keep the same? And what would you do differently?*

*6) Are there additional partnerships that you see the Parks Department engaging in?*

*7) Are there other items you would like to discuss with the group that we did not cover?*

## STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP #1: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Advertising and marketing may be an issue—people still don't know about county parks and, once they arrive, the way-finding signage is not great
- Ways to keep families at parks longer was emphasized (concessions, water activities/programming)
- Emphasis was on maintaining the properties (invasive management and aging infrastructure) and equipment to higher standards
- There are challenges of transportation for community members—most park properties are not on bus routes
- Safe routes to West Terre Haute were discussed

## STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP #2: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Raising capital funds could lend itself to being able to address more priorities
- The sentiment was expressed of not wanting the master plan to be a “maintenance plan”—need to strike a balance of maintain and improve (services and amenities)
- The department has amazing aquatic assets (lakes, rivers, wetlands, trails near rivers and creeks) that it could utilize to a fuller extent
- Several programmatic ideas were shared
- The sentiment was shared that the current department seems stable and the staff are professional

*Complete meeting notes from stakeholder meetings can be found in Appendix F: Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings*

## 4. MEETINGS WITH DEPARTMENT STAFF

Two separate department staff engagements were conducted as part of the master planning process. First, in June of 2019, all full-time staff were asked to participate in a Department Culture Survey. The survey was a way for new department leadership to gauge the current culture of the department and identify specific ways in which the work environment could be improved and/or maintained. Questions from that survey were as follows:

- Please explain, in detail, how you would improve the current culture of your individual park?
- Please explain, in detail, how you would improve the current culture of VCPRD as a whole?
- Does the organization allow you to maintain a satisfactory work-life balance? Why or why not?
- Would you tell friends and family and recommend this is a fun place to work? Why or why not?
- How would you describe your relationship with team members and other colleagues? Be specific.
- Do you feel the leadership team clearly communicates organizational wins, struggles, goals, and strategies? Why or why not?
- How happy are you with your role and responsibilities at VCPRD? Why or why not?
- Do you have the tools and resources you need to perform your job well? Why or why not?

Secondly, in November of 2019, the master plan contracting provider, Collaborative Training Network, asked department leaders a set of questions:

- What are your biggest needs of your position (to make you more successful)?
- What are the most challenging parts of your position?

Though it may not be typical to include staff survey results in a parks and recreation master plan, it was a staff team-building exercise that proved to be illuminating and a call for change. Clear communication and opportunities to identify needs is essential for department staff. Measurable strategic actions related to staffing and operations management were formed as a direct result of these surveys and conversations. After all, in order to have well maintained, beautifully programmed parks there needs to be staff running the show who are both *listened to* and *afforded the tools and resources they need to succeed*.

### MEETINGS WITH DEPARTMENT STAFF: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Staff desire better, transparent communication and more of it; they noted that communication has improved markedly in recently months
- Past negativity has created a strong desire for positivity and accountability in the actions taken by team members
- Staff are very happy to be working outdoors and generally satisfied with their roles/responsibilities
- Staff do not always believe they have the tools/equipment and number of staff to perform jobs well
- Generally, the staff describe their relationships with team members as good

*For strategic actions related to/addressing this section, see Theme 3: Staffing and Operations Management*



## 5. PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

On December 20, 2019 the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board met and reviewed the 2020-2024 draft master plan. Following the board meeting, the plan was made available to the public at the County Offices building and by email request through January 5, 2020.

Summary of Parks and Recreation Board & Public Comment Period:

- Parks Board members reviewed the plan with department staff on December 20, 2019 and expressed positive comments and feedback.
- Draft master plan was added to Facebook page on December 23, 2019 and final public comment period was closed January 5, 2020.
- Two positive comments and nine “likes” were gathered through Facebook posts.
- Local news station WTHI-TV10 released an article, including a link to the plan, on Jan 2, 2020 entitled “Vigo County Parks Department Releases a Rough Draft of its Master Plan”.
- No additional requests or feedback was received.

## NEEDS ANALYSIS

Parks and recreation services and properties have a profound, measurable effect on the health of individuals and the environment in communities across the nation. The healthiest communities who have residents that thrive physically, socially, and economically prioritize parkland and open space, accessible services to all ages and abilities, and offer equitable services to community members of all social levels. Vigo County shines in its potential to create greater opportunity for its community members to engage in recreation programming and services; however, getting community members out and engaged seems to be the challenge for Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department. According to the 2019 County Health Rankings ([www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org)), supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 87% of Vigo County residents have access to exercise opportunities, compared to the state level of only 75%. However, overall, Vigo County ranks in the bottom third of Indiana ratings (83 of 92 counties) for overall health outcomes. This ranking is heavily impacted by other social and economic factors.

Park site visits occurred in October 2019 by the master plan contracting provider, Collaborative Training Network. Site visits to county parks revealed the beauty of Vigo County Parks autumn color. The expansive open space and wildlife viewing areas are a special attraction for the region. A notable gap in service/access to park land lies in the northeast corner of Vigo County; however, a possible property acquisition in that portion of the county has been discussed with the Bean Dinner Association. Preliminary discussions between the Department, Park Board Members, and the Bean Dinner Association will determine feasibility of acquiring this property as a potential area of growth in coming years.

Park tours of the existing facilities and campgrounds did reveal an aging infrastructure, noting many of the deteriorating water and electrical lines. This is not the glamorous side of park infrastructure;

nonetheless, they need tending to, for patron safety and general upkeep of properties. The preventive maintenance mindset is certainly strong in the new leadership of the department.

Though Vigo County Parks is largely designed as a passive recreation system, a great deal of community programming and special events are offered and beloved by the community members.

In terms of recreation and leisure trends, according to the *Sports, Leisure, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participant Report*, the three most popular sports in terms of participation, continue to be:

- Fitness Sports (examples: running, jogging, hiking, walking for fitness, yoga)
- Outdoor Sports (examples: competitive biking, leisure bicycling, hunting, shooting, kayaking, trail running)
- Individual Sports (examples: biking, hunting, shooting, skateboarding, roller skating, horseback riding)

All of these sports can be played and organized on Vigo County parkland, therefore offering a tremendous recreation asset to the Vigo community.

From community survey data, community meetings, and stakeholder focus groups, it became clear that marketing the unique opportunities and programs needed to be a major priority. Strategic actions and thoughtful conversations were had about inclusivity in both program offerings and the park amenities the programming happens around. Department leadership understands the importance and significance of inclusivity and accessibility. Like many under-resourced parks departments around the country, Vigo County staff continues to strive to make accessibility improvements in their daily work and is responsive to community needs by listening and creating strategic action items that address those needs.

The themes and related strategic actions are really where the needs analysis comes to life. The careful analysis of multiple public participation pieces of data and hours of thoughtful future planning comprise the 2020-2024 Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department Strategic Action Schedule.

### OTHER PARKS AND RECREATION PROVIDERS

Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department is certainly not the only provider of open space and recreation programming in the area. The greater Terre Haute community was recently listed on the popular WalletHub website ([www.wallethub.com](http://www.wallethub.com)), as having more parks per citizen (per square root of the population) than many similar sized small cities. In fact, it ranked in the top ten of U.S. cities with populations between 25,000 and 100,000, for its ration of parks per citizen.

*Refer to Appendix G Additional Recreation Locations in Vigo County, for a comprehensive list of recreation services in the area.*





# ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Designated ADA Coordinator:

Adam Grossman, Superintendent

Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department

155 Oak Street, Terre Haute, IN 47807

Phone: 812-462-3392

Adam.Grossman@VigoCounty.in.gov

Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department strives to meet the needs of all community members by providing public spaces and programming that is accessible to the greatest number of users possible. Title II of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires park facilities, amenities, and programs to meet minimum accessibility regulations and that all new construction or alterations be accessible to people with disabilities. It is the goal of this department to not only meet minimum accessibility requirements but to incorporate Universal Design principles and practices in all future park projects to enhance inclusivity within the county park system.

Several strategic actions related to accessibility are woven into the Master Plan Strategic Action Schedule including restroom entrance upgrades, accessibility signage, trail maintenance and resurfacing, accessible campsites, marketing accessible features, and online registration items to allow for selection of special accommodations. The decision to direct large sums of funds to enhance access is a difficult one when considering the department's limited staffing, a growing park system with aging infrastructure, and a budget that hasn't seen a major increase in years. Department leadership understands the importance and significance of inclusivity. The staff continues to strive to make small improvements often and large improvements when the opportunity exists.



## Public Notice of ADA Requirements

Information about accessible facilities and amenities will be available ( summer 2020 ) on park maps located at department offices and Fowler and Hawthorne gatehouses.

## ADA Grievance Procedures

Any person(s) may contact the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department ADA Coordinator with concerns, complaints, questions, and/or comments. The ADA Coordinator can be reached anytime Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

If the ADA Coordinator is not available and you require immediate assistance, please see the Administrative Assistant Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

In 2019, department staff conducted a self-evaluation to determine the current accessibility of VCPRD facilities, amenities, and programs. The details of the self-evaluation are provided below:

## VCPRD ACCESSIBILITY SELF-EVALUATION

### PLAYGROUNDS

- *Accessible Components*
  - ✓ Play equipment accessible with park playgrounds include swings and ground level play equipment
  - ✓ Engineered wood fiber is an ADA-approved material used in all VCPRD playground surface areas
  - ✓ Accessible routes to restroom and parking facilities are established in most parks from all playground areas
- *Not Fully-Accessible Components*
  - ✓ Hawthorn Park playground is within close proximity to restroom facilities but direct playground to restroom is limited due to elevated curb to paved walkway
  - ✓ Play equipment does not include accessible ramps for children with disabilities to utilize equipment on elevated tiers of playground
  - ✓ Prairie Creek Park Maple Shelter does not provide an even ground transition from shelter concrete platform to ground or from shelter to playground

### RESTROOM FACILITIES

- *Accessible Components*
  - ✓ All parks have fully accessible restroom facilities, with the exception of a couple remaining entrances that will be addressed in the Strategic Action Schedule

### PARKING AREAS

- *Accessible Components*
  - ✓ All VCPRD parks meet requirements for sufficient number of parking spaces
  - ✓ Paved concrete, gravel, and engineered wood fiber are utilized as surfacing materials for functionality and accessibility to and from parking areas throughout the park system

- *Not Fully-Accessible Components*

- ✓ Pioneer Village parking area located off Bono Road is surfaced with a gravel size that prevents easy mobility and access into Pioneer Village
- ✓ Parking area spaces need to be re-lined for designated accessible parking spaces to be easily identifiable

### FISHING DOCKS

- *Accessible Components*

- ✓ Fishing docks at Hawthorn Park and Fowler Park are equipped with ramps and accessible walkways

- *Not Fully-Accessible Components*

- ✓ Prairie Creek Park pathway from Persimmon Shelter to fishing pier is non-paved

### TRAILS

- *Accessible Components*

- ✓ Hawthorn Park paved trail is accessible throughout the east side of the park and connects to the paved National Heritage Trail located south of the park and north of Rose Hulman Institute of Technology campus
- ✓ Wabashiki Trail—US Army Corps Levee Portion (1.95)—has small grade gravel and accessible trailhead at Dewey Point
- ✓ Hawthorn Park's Kenneth E. Smith Memorial Labyrinth constructed out of aggregate mix concrete
- ✓ Lee Fields Park walking track is surfaced with small grade gravel

- *Not Fully-Accessible Components*

- ✓ A majority of nature trails throughout the parks system are non-accessible to people with mobility disabilities due to natural terrain including steep inclines, declines, and rough terrain

# THEMES, GOALS, AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

## THEME 1: IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS

**GOAL: ENSURE THAT EXISTING AND FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE IS EFFICIENTLY MANAGED AND MAINTAINED.**

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	POSSIBLE FUNDING MECHANISM
<b>SYSTEM-WIDE</b>		
Install interpretative signage in all parks.	Ongoing	Grants
Continue invasive species eradication to enhance the health and beauty of the forests and scenic views.	Ongoing	Grants
Remove dead trees in areas where they pose a hazard and continue tree replacement schedule.	Ongoing	Operating Budget
Continue addressing aging infrastructure through replacement plan (i.e. waterlines, septic lines, electrical).	Ongoing	EDIT Funds
Install signage related to accessible features in parks.	2020	Operating Budget
Assess and modify all restroom entrances to enable better access.	2021	Operating Budget
Install additional way-finding signage in all parks.	2021	Partnership
Continue conversations with Fontanet Bean Dinner Association to determine feasibility of acquiring property in the northeast corner of county.	2024	Land Acquisition Fund/ Partnership
<b>BICENTENNIAL PARK</b>		
Continue voluntary property acquisition to complete the river walk and establish the connection to the Wabashiki trail.	Ongoing	Land Acquisition Fund/ Grants
Complete trail that links the new connector trail to the Wabash River.	2021	Recreational Trails Program Grant
Improve river scenic view by removing invasive species and dead trees.	2021	In-house
Install lighting at the park.	2022	Recreational Trails Program Grant
Install signage to facilitate environmental education along the Wabash River.	2023	Grants/Partnership

## THEME 1 (CONTINUED): IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS

**GOAL: ENSURE THAT EXISTING AND FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE IS EFFICIENTLY MANAGED AND MAINTAINED.**

<b>STRATEGIC ACTIONS</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COMPLETION</b>	<b>POSSIBLE FUNDING MECHANISM</b>
<b>DEWEY POINT</b>		
Install kayak/canoe launch.	2020	EDIT Funds
Insulate restroom to reduce utility costs during winter months.	2021	EDIT Funds
Install additional amenities to encourage water recreation, social gatherings, and wildlife viewing.	2021	EDIT Funds
Install signage to facilitate environmental education.	2023	EDIT Funds
<b>ELLIOTT WOODS NATURE PRESERVE</b>		
Rebuild all bridges.	2022	Operating Budget/Non-reverting Funds
Perform resurfacing trail work to enhance seasonal access to trail.	2022	Operating Budget/Non-reverting Funds
<b>ERIE CANAL LOCK PROPERTY</b>		
Install signage referencing the historic site information.	2021	Operating Budget/Grants
Create parking area.	2021	Operating Budget/Grants
Perform trail work to enhance seasonal access to rugged trail.	2021	Grants/Operating Budget
<b>FOWLER PARK</b>		
Conduct maintenance on Pioneer Village cabins and associated features.	Ongoing	Grants/EDIT Funds
Complete updates to structural integrity of Irishman’s Bridge.	2020	EDIT Funds/Donations
Update barn AV equipment.	2020	Operating Budget
Explore installation of water feature rentals.	2020	Non-reverting Funds
Explore and determine vendors and items to be offered to campers.	2021	Donations/Non-reverting Funds
Build walkways to all grills at shelters to enhance accessibility.	2021	Operating Budget/Non-reverting Funds
Explore installation of accessible campsites.	2021	Grants
Install boat docks.	2022	Operating Budget
Install new Bentlinger playground.	2024	Grants/Donations
<b>GEORGE &amp; IDA SMITH PARK (PRAIRIETON PARK)</b>		
Re-establish the garden originally maintained by volunteers.	2020	In-house
Resurface parking area.	2021	Operating Budget

## THEME 1 (CONTINUED): IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS

**GOAL: ENSURE THAT EXISTING AND FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE IS EFFICIENTLY MANAGED AND MAINTAINED.**

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	POSSIBLE FUNDING MECHANISM
<b>GRIFFIN BIKE PARK</b>		
Continue to work with Shepherds of Griffin Bike Park to identify and apply for funding.	Ongoing	Partnership
Install trail feature upgrades to enhance the user experience.	Ongoing	Donations
Partner with volunteer groups to facilitate events.	Ongoing	Partnership
Install bike tool stations.	2020	Donations
Hire and retain seasonal staff to assist with maintenance.	2020	Partnership
Install additional water access (for drinking and course maintenance).	2020	Donations
Resurface parking lot near Warrior Trail to enhance accessibility.	2021	Donations
Obtain and establish system for offering rental bikes for charge.	2021	Donations/Partnership
Explore and determine partner for economic impact study.	2021	Partnership
Conduct economic impact study with partner.	2022	Donations
Install electrical power to the landing zone.	2022	Donations
<b>HAWTHORN PARK</b>		
Complete dam repair.	2020	Operating Budget
Install exercise equipment.	2020	EDIT Funds
Repair archery range.	2020	Volunteers
Complete amphitheater repair.	2020	Operating Budget
Explore and determine vendors and items to be offered to campers.	2021	Donations/Non-reverting Funds
Labyrinth clean-up and replanting of low-maintenance vegetation.	2021	Operating Budget
Add additional water feature(s).	2021	Operating Budget
Install soccer goals.	2021	Operating Budget
Seal and pave roadways.	2022	EDIT Funds
Install new drainage in campground (ditches and piping).	2022	EDIT Funds
Re-surface paved trails.	2023	EDIT Funds

## THEME 1 (CONTINUED): IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS

**GOAL: ENSURE THAT EXISTING AND FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE IS EFFICIENTLY MANAGED AND MAINTAINED.**

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	POSSIBLE FUNDING MECHANISM
<b>J.I. CASE WETLAND</b>		
Add additional water feature(s).	2020	In-house
Add educational interpretive signage.	2021	Operating Budget
<b>LEE FIELDS PARK</b>		
Install water hookups to be used for drinking fountains and other uses.	2020	Partnership
Explore and implement strategies to increase perceived safety and reduce vandalism.	2021	Partnership
Identify different options for amenity investment and ask surrounding community members which amenities they prefer.	2023	Operating Budget
<b>MARKLE MILL PARK</b>		
Plan and install memorial plaque among red bud trees (on 9-11-20) to memorialize 9/11 victims and first responders.	2020	Donations
Plant additional redbud trees as the others deteriorate.	2021	Donations
Assess and determine whether to upgrade or remove restroom facility, due to vandalism and misuse.	2021	Operating Budget
Explore installation of kayak/canoe exit.	2022	Donations
<b>PRAIRIE CREEK PARK</b>		
Continue to monitor value-added of maple syrup services (revenues, programming, stewardship). Adjust production accordingly.	Ongoing	Non-reverting Funds
Mark historic gravesite with educational signage.	2020	In-house
Repair and restore bridges.	2020	Operating Budget
Resurface and re-slope boat ramp.	2021	Operating Budget
Explore and complete trail/bridge reconfiguring for better access to shelter.	2021	Donations
Seal and pave roadways.	2021	EDIT Funds
Assess camping sites that have drainage issues and install gravel camping pads to remedy the issue.	2021	Operating Budget
Expand amenities around the sugar cabin to enhance interpretive programming.	2022	Operating Budget
Explore and install additional parking options.	2023	Operating Budget
Improve access or steps to boat launch area	2023	Operating Budget

## THEME 1 (CONTINUED): IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS

**GOAL: ENSURE THAT EXISTING AND FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE IS EFFICIENTLY MANAGED AND MAINTAINED.**

<b>STRATEGIC ACTIONS</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COMPLETION</b>	<b>POSSIBLE FUNDING MECHANISM</b>
<b>R. KERMIT FLESHER STATE NATURE PRESERVE</b>		
Install new park signage.	2020	Operating Budget
Perform trail work to enhance seasonal access to trail.	2022	Volunteers
<b>RUBLE PARK</b>		
Manage prairie grasses on rotation.	Ongoing	In-house
Complete trail development (stone paths, log paths, clearing).	2020	EDIT Funds
Create parking area.	2020	Edit Funds
Add benches at scenic views.	2020	EDIT Funds
Assist in the completion of trail head near Ivy Tech (parking space & restroom access).	2020	Grants
<b>SOUTH 7TH STREET PARK</b>		
Explore and implement strategies to increase perceived safety and reduce vandalism.	2021	Partnership
Explore the impact of fencing in the park.	2021	Operating Budget
Gain access to the Wabashiki Trail by creating connector path to park.	2021	Partnership
<b>WABASHIKI TRAIL</b>		
Continue ongoing partnership with Indiana State University for perpetual maintenance of the trail.	Ongoing	Partnership
Continue regular trail maintenance.	Ongoing	Partnership /Volunteers
Complete maintenance and repairs on walking bridge.	2020	ISU Partner/Operating Budget
Install gates at entry points.	2021	ISU Partner/Operating Budget
Explore the designation of a Blue Trail along the Wabashiki Trail and Wabash waterway to improve access and protect the river and surrounding lands.	2023	In-house

## THEME 2: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

**GOAL: CREATE, MAINTAIN, AND ADVERTISE RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMING FOR THE VIGO COUNTY COMMUNITY.**

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	POSSIBLE FUNDING MECHANISM
<b>MARKETING</b>		
Use Google maps data to showcase “Google trail view” of park trails.	Ongoing	Partnership
Partner to produce better marketing products.	2020	Operating Budget
Publicize camping opportunities on camp websites.	2020	In-house
Gather and review all marketing materials and identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.	2020	In-house
Implement enhanced process for marketing programs and services.	2020	In-house
Coordinate with the “Meet Me In Terre Haute” campaign and “Better Health Terre Haute” by participating in meetings and/or having the department’s services and programming incorporated into the regional marketing efforts.	2020	In-house
Utilize Friends of Griffin Bike Park, and associated groups, to create marketing material specific to Griffin Bike Park that target biking communities in the region.	2021	Partnership
Create detailed trail/park maps, including accessible features, and make them available in print at the office and online through the department website.	2021	Operating Budget
Review and reassign department staff representation on local boards and committees to ensure equitable representation and a “seat at the table”.	2021	In-house
Purchase or obtain mailing lists in order to increase awareness of department programming and amenities.	2021	Operating Budget
Gather and review all marketing materials and identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.	2022	In-house
Gather and review all marketing materials and identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.	2024	In-house



<b>STRATEGIC ACTIONS</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COMPLETION</b>	<b>POSSIBLE FUNDING MECHANISM</b>
<b>PROGRAMMING</b>		
Survey existing park patrons about specific special events and outdoor/nature programming desired in the community.	2020	Non-reverting Funds
Add the option in the programming registration process to identify whether a special accommodation is needed.	2020	Non-reverting Funds
Implement at least one new special event and one new outdoor/environmental program (to address identified need in community survey).	2021	Non-reverting Funds
Implement at least one new program that reaches a population not historically reached by the department.	2021	Non-reverting Funds
Initiate one family-oriented running/walking event that utilizes department trails and brings awareness to department assets.	2022	Non-reverting Funds
Once participant email list is established, explore the desire for adopt-a-neighborhood park program (similar to neighborhood watch program).	2023	Non-reverting Funds

### THEME 3: STAFFING AND OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

**GOAL: IMPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY THROUGH THOUGHTFUL LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING FOR IMPROVED OPERATIONS.**

STRATEGIC ACTIONS	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	POSSIBLE FUNDING MECHANISM
<b>STAFFING</b>		
Continue monthly staff meetings in order to identify any barriers and solutions to challenges.	Ongoing	In-house
Establish regular meetings for leadership staff and maintenance staff (especially in the time of establishing new department leadership).	Ongoing	In-house
Explore opportunities for staff training/development and identify/provide at least one applicable training every other year to full-time staff.	Ongoing	In-house
In January each year, hold a staff meeting to review the master plan and adjust the plan for the upcoming year.	Ongoing	In-house
Facilitate employee evaluations every January.	Ongoing	In-house
Develop a staffing plan that considers future department needs.	2020	In-house
Explore new on-boarding/recruiting opportunities for seasonal employment.	2021	In-house
<b>OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT</b>		
Utilize 2020-2024 Department Master Plan during monthly meetings and board updates.	Ongoing	In-house
Continue to identify partnerships for trail connections.	Ongoing	In-house
Continue to identify partnerships and volunteers to help with park clean-up and gardening.	Ongoing	In-house
Identify and implement an electronic registration system for programming and shelter reservations.	2020	Non-reverting Funds
Review and implement comp time policy.	2020	In-house
Review and adjust fees for all programs and services.	2021	In-house
Conduct an assessment and set a replacement plan for aging equipment (heavy equipment, lawn mowers, tractors, etc.).	2021	In-house
Develop and implement a vehicle maintenance and repair plan.	2021	In-house
Explore online camping reservation system.	2022	In-house
Start a regular playground maintenance inspection program to more closely monitor equipment and surfacing.	2022	In-house
Determine feasibility of acquiring/utilizing existing space for an operations space in West Terre Haute.	2023	In-house
Apply for a minimum of two grants.	2024	In-house

# ADOPTION RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board is aware of the parks and recreation needs of the residents of Vigo County, Indiana; and

WHEREAS, the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board realizes the importance of pro-active, sound planning in order to meet the needs of its residents; and

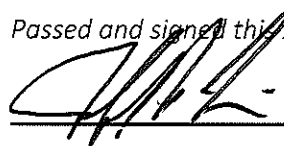
WHEREAS, the plan provides detailed recommendations for parks and recreation facilities, and recreation programming in an action schedule; and

WHEREAS, the plan meets the requirements of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, thereby making Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department eligible for State and Federal grants administered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources; and

WHEREAS, Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department followed a planning process that contained public participation, including a community-wide needs assessment survey, focus group stakeholder meetings with community organizations, and public meetings for purposes of soliciting input for said plan; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board does adopt the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department 2020-2024 Master Plan as its official plan for the next five years, for the growth and development of parks and recreational opportunities in Vigo County.

*Passed and signed this 23 day of March, 2020*

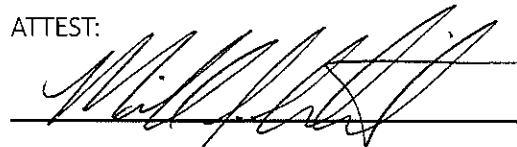


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Board President

Vigo County Parks and Recreation Board

ATTEST:

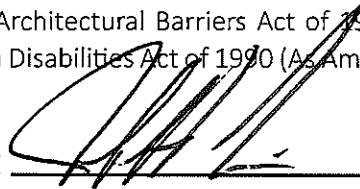


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Michael Wright, Vigo County Attorney

**ASSURANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE WITH:  
ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS ACT OF 1968 (AS AMENDED);  
SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (AS AMENDED);  
AND TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990  
(AS AMENDED)**

The Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department has read the guidelines for compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (As Amended); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (As Amended); and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (As Amended) and will comply with the applicable requirements of these Acts.

SIGNATURE  \_\_\_\_\_  
APPLICANT PRESIDENT

JEFFREY H. FISHER  
(President's printed name)

SIGNATURE  \_\_\_\_\_  
Eddy J. Adams  
(Secretary's printed name)

DATE 3-23-20





VIGO COUNTY  
PARKS & RECREATION  
DEPARTMENT



**COLLABORATIVE**  
— TRAINING NETWORK —