



Bobcat on southwest Indiana WRP



Mallards on Wabash River WRP



This publication is the second issue of a direct mail piece intended to provide information to holders of NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and Emergency Watershed Protection Program Floodplain Easements (EWP-FPE) and to identify the activities that are taking place with respect to easements across Indiana. This publication replaces the certified letters that have been sent to easement holders in past years.

INDIANA ● WRP/EWP-FPE ISSUE 2 ● JANUARY, 2014

WRP/EWP-FPE Easement Owner Newsletter

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2014 MONITORING BEGINS

NRCS annually inspects all of its easements. Inspections may occasionally be done remotely using aerial photography, but in many cases the monitoring will be completed on site. This is a great opportunity to meet with NRCS to discuss any concerns you have regarding your easement. You will be notified if your easement is selected for onsite monitoring and given the opportunity to participate. Of course, even if it is not selected, please contact NRCS regarding any concerns or questions you may have about your easement.

TELL US YOUR SUCCESS STORY

Thank you to everyone who submitted your photos and stories regarding your easement. The photos in this newsletter are just a few of those that were submitted. This year was filled with fantastic success stories, including new easements with documented use by the critically endangered Whooping Crane. The year was also filled with bobcat sightings, successful Least Tern hatches, and more reports of nesting Sandhill Cranes. Goose Pond in Greene County reported over 50,000 migrating waterfowl on just one day! Please continue to send easement success stories to the NRCS State Easement Program Specialist at brianne.lowe@in.usda.gov. Stories and locations used in future publications may remain anonymous upon request.



A PARTNERSHIP EFFORT - HEALTHY RIVERS INITIATIVE

Today, nearly 62,000 acres have been enrolled in the WRP and nearly 8,000 in the Floodplain Easement program in Indiana. This was no small feat, and in large part due to our many partners across the state. One of these partnership efforts is the Healthy Rivers Initiative.

The Healthy Rivers Initiative (HRI) is a partnership of resource agencies and organizations working with willing landowners to permanently protect floodplain and bottomland habitat in the Wabash River and Sugar Creek watershed in west-central Indiana, and the Muscatatuck River watershed in southeast Indiana. The Wetlands Reserve Program has played an important role in this effort. To date, over 30,517 acres of habitat are protected in the HRI watersheds. Approximately 10,095 of these protected acres are enrolled in the WRP.

The goal of the HRI is protection, restoration, and enhancement of riparian and aquatic habitats and the species that use them, particularly threatened or endangered migratory birds and waterfowl. This initiative also benefits the public and surrounding communities by providing flood protection to riparian landowners, increasing public access to recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and bird watching, and leaving a legacy for future generations. For more information about HRI, visit www.healthyrivers.IN.gov.



Southwest Indiana WRP



Bobcats on WRP Site



Woodducks on Wabash River WRP

HUNTING ON EASEMENTS - WHAT'S PERMITTED

Hunting is one of the rights to undeveloped recreation retained by the landowner. Any hunting activity is subject to the Indiana hunting and fishing state regulations. The Warranty Easement Deed specifically prohibits the use of the easement to raise, stock, and/or release captive bred game. Also prohibited is the disturbance of nests and brood-rearing of wildlife, including migratory birds. Dogs should not be trained on site during the nesting season.

The use of hunting equipment such as tree stands and hunting blinds that are rustic and customary is a reserved right of the landowner. In Indiana, blinds meeting this definition will be temporary in nature and result in minimal surface disturbance. For all easements enrolled prior to 2012, blinds currently existing on the easement, which do not meet the definition of rustic and customary, may be utilized "as is." Once the existing blinds

degrade, they may not be replaced, except with a blind meeting the current rustic and customary specifications. Any new blind must also meet the definition of rustic and customary. A new fact sheet regarding hunting and WRP is available on the Indiana NRCS easement website. Please consult your local NRCS field office with questions regarding the permissibility of a specific type of blind: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/contact/local/

As a reminder, landowners of the easement property retain the right to control access to the land. This means your easement is not open to the public without your permission. NRCS retains the right to access the site to ensure easement terms and conditions are being met, but it is up to the landowner's discretion what type of access is granted to others. It is your right and responsibility to control access and limit trespassing.

REMINDER - ALWAYS ASK FIRST!

When in doubt whether or not an activity is permissible - **ASK FIRST**. If an activity affects vegetation or alters water levels there is a good chance a Compatible Use Authorization is required.

Compatible Use Authorizations are not guaranteed. Please contact your local NRCS field office prior to beginning any activity. www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/contact/local/