



City Forest Credits Preservation Project Application

1. Project Name

Eagle Creek Park Forest Legacy Initiative

2. Project Operator

Provide name of organization/entity, and contact information

Organization/Entity: City of Indianapolis, Department of Parks and Recreation

Address: 200 E. Washington Street, Suite 2301

City: Indianapolis

State: IN

Zip: 46204

Contact(s): Phyllis Boyd, Director of Indianapolis Parks and Recreation

Phone: N/A

Operator Email: Phyllis.Boyd@Indy.gov

Project Administrator: Don Colvin, Deputy Director of Indianapolis Parks and Recreation

Phone: N/A

Email: Don.Colvin@Indy.gov

Project Lead: Don Miller, DPW-Land Stewardship Manager

Phone: 317-327-7416

Email: Don.Miller@Indy.gov

3. Project Location

Projects must be in or adjacent to one of the following. Describe which one of the criteria the project meets and provide name of city, town, or jurisdiction where project is located.

- "Urban Area" per Census Bureau maps*
- An incorporated or unincorporated city or town*
- A planning area for a metropolitan planning agency or entity, such as the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning*
- Land owned, designated, and used by a municipal or quasi-municipal entity such as a utility for source water or watershed protection*
- A transportation or utility right of way through one of above*

The project area at Eagle Creek Park is within the boundaries of the City of Indianapolis, IN, an incorporated city.

Address: 7840 W 56th St, Indianapolis, IN 46254

Parcel numbers: 6004923, 6004924, 6004928, 6002505, 6001857, 6030558, 6030559, 6001506, 6001509, 6001512

4. Project Description

Provide short narrative of the project goals, Project Area acreage, land ownership, forest characteristics, and land use/zoning. Provide details about when the property was acquired or potential timeline for acquisition. Include information about when carbon crediting was first introduced into the overall project scope.

The City of Indianapolis community is fortunate to have Eagle Creek Park, which spans 4,785 acres on the city's northwest side. The park is home to a diverse array of wildlife that depend on the quality of its habitat, one of the primary forested areas in central Indiana. It's a haven for resident flora and fauna and a premier destination for the visitors who come specifically to see rare species of birds that are attracted to the forest and mudflats along the perimeter of the reservoir. The park has old and young forests with wetlands and meadow habitats that connect other riparian corridors extending outside the county. Visitors hike the varied landscape through the many trails and along some of the park's 130 miles of ephemeral and perennial streams. The Eagle Creek Park Forest Legacy Initiative is a commitment that will help ensure forested areas in this program are protected and sustainably managed for future generations. The overall goal of the project involves preserving approximately 480 acres of land within the selected preservation areas (Exhibit A).

The parkland, which is owned by the City of Indianapolis, is zoned as Park District (PK 1/PK2) and, while most of the park can be developed with or without permitting, there are specific areas where building structures are typically not allowed. Eagle Creek Park is not inherently protected by being a park. Without a legally binding instrument, such as a State-dedicated Nature Preserve designation or deed restriction, the park's tree canopy and the land itself remain vulnerable to changes well into the future as open space becomes much less available. During the first three decades since becoming a park, significant areas of park land were transferred or leased and some of its forested areas were cleared. There are no known protection overlays that apply to the entire park. There is a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) rule for this park, but the LWCF rule has not prevented park land going up for sale, lease or forest removal. Examples of the conversion process included bridge expansion, highway expansion and the lease of park land for a restaurant.

By enrolling as an urban forest carbon preservation project under the City Forest Credits (CFC) Tree Preservation Protocol, the city aims to secure the long-term protection and conservation of select forested land within the park's bounds. The City became interested in carbon crediting for Eagle Creek Park in August 2021, and began conversations with City Forest Credits in January 2022. Certification in the program will further safeguard key sections of forests from being cut or sold in the distant future while also providing a potential planned source of revenue for fieldwork. Invasive plants and insects are the cause of the decline of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (identified in the IDNR Heritage Database), second only to habitat clearing. Intact native plant communities within the forest understory are essential to biotic diversity and sustainability of this ecosystem and the extent of the ecological services the resource provides. Protection and preservation of the forested areas benefit the community and support the natural resource sustainability goals of the THRIVE Indianapolis plan.

Forest Structure and Tree Species

The wooded plots selected for this application consist of predominantly dense canopy cover and include the following general characteristics:

- Even-aged, deciduous regrowth forest on former agricultural land, some include small pockets of conifer
- Uneven-aged, older-second growth areas with varying degrees of disturbance from previous structure and apparent livestock grazing
- Regrowth woods with scattered larger canopy trees that were spared from clearing operations during settlement

Native tree canopy species include, maple, beech, elm, oak, hickory, hackberry, black cherry, box elder and sycamore. The forest soil moisture characteristics include upland mesic with pockets of wet-mesic with some stands of dry-mesic

on the southern end of the park. These have been impacted during farming, settlement, and alterations in drainage such as tiles and ditches.

5. Project Impacts

Provide short narrative of the environmental, social, and health impacts this project will achieve. Examples include how the project addresses increased access to green spaces for under-resourced communities, flood control or watershed protection, benefits for human health and well-being, improved recreation opportunities, or protects bird and wildlife habitat.

The tracts that are preserved as part of this carbon Project, for which the carbon storage is deemed additional (and verified) under the CFC Tree Preservation Protocol, will be targets for planned management. The revenue from the carbon credit sales will be used as funding for the purpose of conservation management. Indianapolis Parks and Recreation (Indy Parks) has historically included stewardship of park lands as a planned and essential activity in its Comprehensive Master Plan. Management of park natural areas is necessary for ecosystem services, stormwater quality, air quality, biodiversity, climate resiliency, and pollinator protection. The forests of Eagle Creek Park surround and protect Eagle Creek Reservoir, a major drinking water source for the city of Indianapolis.

The co-benefits of the Eagle Creek Park Forest Legacy Initiative will make a positive impact on the ecological services delivery to the community. Modeling will be done to help assess the ecosystem service which have shown to benefit public health, crime, lessen stormwater runoff and improve air quality and pollution removal. The healthier the forest and understory the more the benefits for people and wildlife.

Ecosystem benefits for forests include:

- Buffers protect streams by capturing more than 75% excess nutrients and contaminants
- Canopy of healthy woodland/understory preserves the natural water cycle by intercepting up to 60,000 gallons of stormwater annually
- Healthy forests can reduce peak summer temperatures up to 10 degrees Fahrenheit compared to non-forested/developed land covers
- Can infiltrate 3X more water than a typical lawn
- Can sequester carbon every year
- Reduce anxiety, improve sleep, increase concentration, memory, creativity, and energy
- Is home to a native community of plants that support breeding birds, amphibians and reptiles that would not be possible without this habitat
- Increased passive recreation opportunities for hiking/walking and nature observation like photography, bird watching and nature study and education

The forest protection necessary to preserving the selected woods, made possible by revenue generated from the CFC project include:

- Camera monitoring for unauthorized use of the forest; off-road use, unauthorized sport biking jumps and trails
- Addition of fencing to help protect unauthorized trail building, painting trees, and wooded clearing
- Improved trail access for users and for utility maintenance for ecological restoration such as invasive plant control

The benefits listed above summarizes the importance of the CFC program to users and park management to better care for the park.

6. Additional Information

Provide additional information about your project. If the Project Area is part of a larger program or preservation effort, include one sentence with more information. Examples include collaboration with other partners to preserve forestland or how this project fits into a regional initiative.

Indy Parks and Recreation (Indy Parks) serves as the Project Operator/owner and manager of parkland held in the public's trust. One of the most impactful initiatives has been to begin management of the deer herd within the park. By reducing the deer abundance to a sustainable level, the browse impacts on vegetation have been balanced to closer match the carrying capacity of the forest habitats. The park is surrounded by roads and tall fences along interstates that tend to limit deer herd movement to within the park boundary. Continued management will be necessary for the recovery of native shrubs and oak tree regeneration. While this preservation initiative aims to protect the canopy and forested tract in situ, the added ecological management benefits both people and wildlife. Sustaining the forest understory is central to the natural integrity of the deed-protected woodland.

Wetland restoration and reforestation and other habitat-related practices such as the planting of pollinator fields with prairie vegetation are also part of the overall conservation management of the park landscape. The planted wildflower meadows serve as future reforestation tracts after a decade or more of soil stabilization and carbon enrichment of the previous soil profile that was degraded by years of unsustainable row crop agriculture. The hundreds of acres of trees that have been planted in the park over the years are gradually reaching full canopy coverage (1992-present) and can be included in future CFC Preservation programs to ensure the long investment in ecological restoration remains protected by deed restriction.

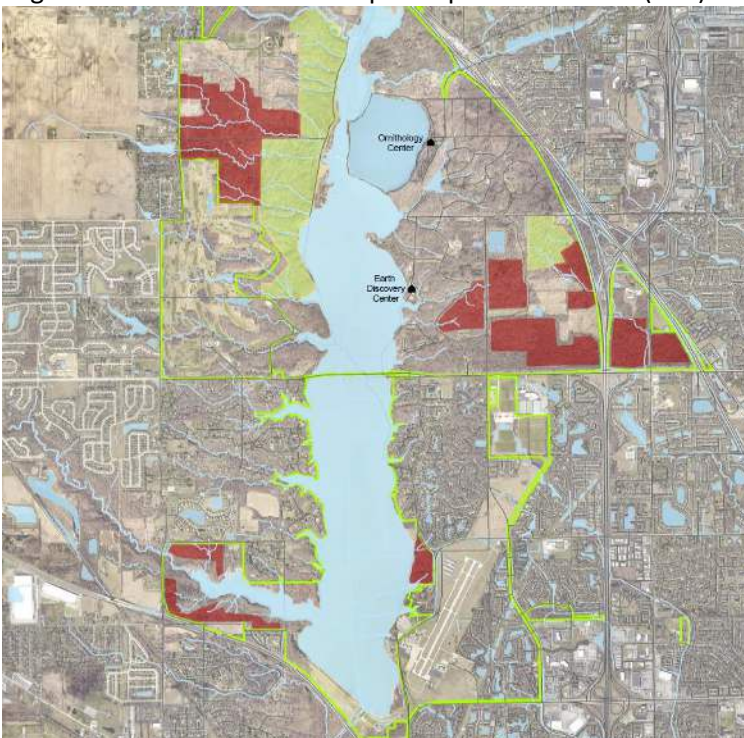
Interest over the years in helping to protect the park has resulted in partnerships that help Indy Parks meet management objectives. The Eagle Creek Park Foundation serves a major partner role: Its mission is to promote, preserve, protect and enhance Eagle Creek Park. The park manager and city department staff also track and facilitate over 100 active partnerships, too numerous to mention here. The value associated with these relationships and awarded grants have made it possible for many of the improvements that help ensure the cultural history and natural heritage associated with Eagle Creek Park.

7. Map

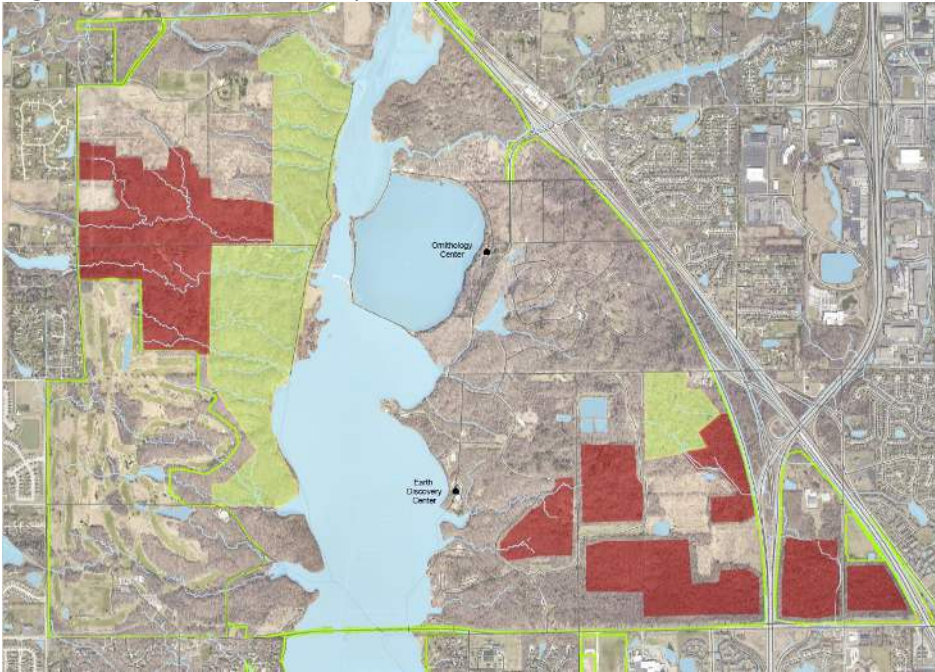
Provide a map of the Project Area.

Exhibit A

Eagle Creek Park: Overall – Proposed protected areas (Red)



Eagle Creek Park: North – Proposed protected areas (Red)



Eagle Creek Park: South – Proposed protected areas (Red)



Signed on January 16 in 2024, by *Phyllis Boyd, Director of Indianapolis Parks and Recreation for City of Indianapolis, Department of Parks and Recreation.*

Phyllis Boyd

Signature

Phyllis Boyd

Printed Name

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