

OUABACHE NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER FOR THE OUABACHE LAND CONSERVANCY

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Phone: 812-237-2396

Information about OLC can be found on their website at ouabachelandconservancy.org



Mission Statement:

The Ouabache Land Conservancy protects, preserves and restores land in west central Indiana to provide habitat for wildlife, maintain natural scenic beauty, improve water quality, and secure the means to produce food and fiber for future generations.

FIRST ANNUAL OLC MEMBERSHIP MEETING

In a Nutshell:

Date: January 28, 2011
Time: 6:00 Social Hour
and Silent Auction
7:00 Dinner
Location: Gerhard's Bierstube
1724 Lafayette Ave
Price: \$25 per person
RSVP: Phil Cox
(765)548-4007 or
philwcox@gmail.com

The Ouabache Land Conservancy will be hosting its 1st annual meeting and banquet Friday, January 28 at Gerhard's Bierstube at 1724 Lafayette Avenue in Terre Haute. The featured speakers for the evening will be Tom Swinford (Indiana Division of Nature Preserves Central Region Ecologist), Dr. John Whitaker (Director of the Center for North American Bat Research and Conservation) and Dr. Marion Jackson (Indiana State University Professor Emeritus). They will present 'The Ecology of the Otter Creek Valley'. There will be a social hour and silent auction (donations accepted) beginning at 6:00 with dinner at 7:00. The meal will be served family style with Kassler Rippchen (smoked pork chops steamed in beer & spices), marinated boneless breast of chicken, German potato salad, red cabbage, green beans, salad, bread, coffee or tea. The meal is \$25 per person, and reservations are required. Make reservations by contacting Phil Cox at (765)548-4007 or philwcox@gmail.com no later than **January 20**. Checks should be made payable to Ouabache Land Conservancy and mailed to Phil Cox, P.O. Box 237, Clinton, IN 47842, or payment can be made at the door. Please come help celebrate Ouabache Land Conservancy's 2010 accomplishments and their vision for 2011. Donations for the silent auction may be brought to the banquet. **Non-members are welcome!**

FALL FOLIAGE HIKE, OCTOBER 30, 2010

About 35 members of the Ouabache Land Conservancy, Wabash Valley Audubon Society and Sister Theresa Boland's class of future educators from St. Mary-of-the-Woods College enjoyed a brisk Fall Foliage Hike at the Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve on October 30. The 15 acre preserve is located a little west of St. Mary-of-the-Woods College. The hike celebrated the one-year anniversary of its dedication as a State nature preserve. Dr. Marion Jackson (the preserve's namesake) lead (and taught) everyone through the reconstructed tallgrass prairie and approximately 25 species of trees found on the preserve. We hope that this will be a continuing event for the Ouabache Land Conservancy. Look for the Jackson-Schnyder to be included in the revised directory of Indiana Nature Preserves!





NEWPORT CHEMICAL DEPOT: TALLGRASS PRAIRIE IN JEOPARDY

The Newport Chemical Depot (NECD) is a U.S. Army installation that was originally established as the Wabash River Ordnance Works (WROW) in 1941. Previously, the installation has also officially been called the Newport Army Ammunition Plant (NAAP) and Newport Chemical Activity (NECA). NECD is in a unique approximately 7,100 acre area of west central Indiana. NECD is located in Vermillion County between two natural regions of west central Indiana climate - the Grand Prairie and the Central Till Plain. The Grand Prairie is characterized by its dark and fertile soils and the Central Till Plain is known for its nearly flat to gently rolling landscape. The Depot lies along the boundary between the Grand Prairie and Entrenched Valley Sections. The Wabash River dominates the area where these regions meet; however, the boundary is not well defined, but rather a mosaic of bluestem prairie and oak-hickory forest. This edge effect has increased the diversity of flora and fauna at NECD.

In 1993, the NECD Operating Contractor, Mason & Hanger Corp., contracted with the Indiana Division of Nature Preserves to complete the report "Inventory of Natural Areas and Rare Plant Species within the Newport Army Ammunition Plant". The report provided inspiration to start reconstruction of the Newport Chemical Depot Tallgrass Prairie, stating "A large acreage of the southwestern portion of NAAP was formerly mesic silt loam prairie. The Vermillion County Soil Survey showed prairie soils for this area, old Indiana county maps showed a large area of prairie, and we observed Big Bluestem and Prairie Dock along the road in the area. A restoration this large (1900 +/- acres) in this part of the Midwest is an exciting opportunity. There are no remnants in Indiana of prairies of the size of this potential restoration. The largest prairies that do remain in the state are sand prairies; thus the significance of this area is even more important because it is silt loam prairie restoration." In recognition of the Grand Prairie's importance to Indiana's history - and more specifically, the ecology of NECD - the NECD successfully reconstructed a portion of NECD to pre-settlement prairie conditions through a series of prairie reconstruction projects begun in 1994 and continuing until 2005. The prairie reconstruction projects were halted after NECD was placed on the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) List and subsequently scheduled for closure.

A total of approximately 336 acres was removed from row-crop production and converted to tallgrass prairie. Peter Schramm of Peter Schramm - Prairie Restorations was contracted to prepare the seedbed, supply the seed and plant all of the acreage in the spring of the year with a Nesbit drill. Local farmers prepared the seedbed. Schramm is a retired Knox College (Galesburg, Illinois) professor who pioneered prairie restoration techniques and has over 40 years of experience in the field. The total contracted cost of the 336 acre prairie reconstruction was \$127,589; and was paid entirely from a small portion of the proceeds from NECD's annual agricultural leases. Only in 1994 was herbicide (glyphosate) used to assist with the seedbed preparation. In all of the subsequent years, only shallow tillage methods were used. A total of six species of grasses and fifty-four species of forbs were planted.

Prescribed burning in the spring has been the primary means to protect the prairie from weedy invasions. The Indiana Division of Forestry has played a major role in conducting the prescribed burns as the schedule of NECD would allow. All of the areas have been burned at least once, except for the 47.2 acres planted in 2000. In 2007 and 2009 NECD partnered with the Indiana Division of Forestry & Sycamore Trails RC&D to train local firefighters, natural resources professionals and the general public how to manage prairie with prescribed burning. In addition, Mason & Hanger Corp. has mowed wildlife travel lanes in the larger tracts of prairie that were planted in 2001 and 2002. In addition, approximately 91 acres of prairie that was planted in 2003, 2004 and 2005 was leased and cut once per year for prairie hay in 2007 and 2008. The forb rich areas adjacent to the main roads were not allowed to be cut for prairie hay.

The main reason for reconstructing the NECD Tallgrass Prairie was to increase the abundance and species diversity of wildlife in west central Indiana. The significant decline of grassland bird species is well documented in reports such as the multi-agency 2010 State of the Birds Report. Many grassland bird species (most declining) have been documented at the Newport Chemical Depot. State endangered grassland bird species that have been documented at NECD are as follows: Henslow's Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Northern Harrier, Sedge Wren, and Peregrine Falcon (hunting Ring-necked Pheasant). Another interesting prairie area sighting is the State special concern species Bobcat roaming the area.

The Newport Chemical Depot was awarded the U.S. Army Environmental Security Award for Natural Resources Conservation in 1996 (for 1994, 1995 and 1996) and 2003 (for 2001, 2002 and 2003). Reconstruction of the prairie was a major focus of winning these awards. Now the Newport Chemical Depot is home to the largest contiguous black soil prairie in the State of Indiana (by far); with room to potentially expand to over 2,000 total acres if the prairie reconstruction is continued on pre-settlement prairie soils and beyond. As stated in the Indiana Department of Natural Resources March 20, 2009 letter to the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority, "At one time 14% of the State of Indiana was covered with prairie grasses. Today less than one-tenth of 1% exists. Today, in the 21st century, prairies and the grassland animals dependent upon them are considered globally threatened.

The importance of prairie to endangered grassland species, floodwater retention, groundwater recharge, watershed protection, return of carbon to soils, erosion control, and aesthetics, among many other realized benefits, has caused prairie conservation to become an increasingly important issue. A restoration of prairie on this scale would be of national significance."

However, the Newport Chemical Depot is scheduled for closure in accordance with Base Realignment and Closure Law. The Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority's Reuse Plan makes no provisions for absolutely protecting the prairie. In fact, approximately 90% of the Newport Chemical Depot Tallgrass Prairie is in areas that could be plowed up or paved over, with little regard for the prairie and its wildlife. Furthermore, the Department of Defense has not indicated that they have a problem with the probable new owner (Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority) implementing the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan's indifference concerning the conservation of the Newport Chemical Depot Tallgrass Prairie. Therefore, the Newport Chemical Depot Prairie and all of the life that it holds is in jeopardy - reminiscent of its fate in the 19th century.

Currently the Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) are available for review and comment until December 17, 2010. Copies of the EA and draft FNSI can be obtained by contacting Ms. Cathy Collins, Engineer, Newport Chemical Depot at 765-245-4391, or at cathy.m.collins@us.army.mil. The EA and draft FNSI are also available on the Internet at http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsim/brac/env_ea_review.htm. A copy of the EA and draft FNSI is also available for review at the Clinton Public Library. Comments on the EA and draft FNSI should be submitted to Ms. Collins via e-mail or U.S. Mail at P.O. Box 160, Newport, IN 47966. Comments on the EA and draft FNSI should be submitted by no later than December 17, 2010.

All persons that advocate absolutely protecting the largest black soil prairie in the State of Indiana from future destruction should send their comments stating such, as soon as possible, and no later than December 17, 2010.

By Phil Cox, reprinted from Nature Notes & News Dec 2010/Jan 2011 (Wabash Valley Audobon Society)

EVEN THOUGH THIS DEADLINE HAS PASSED, YOU CAN STILL HELP SAVE THE PRAIRIE BY CONTACTING CONGRESSMAN LARRY BUCSHON AND SENATORS DAN COATS AND RICHARD LUGAR TO ADVOCATE THAT THE ARMY PROTECT THE PRAIRIE AT NEWPORT CHEMICAL DEPOT - EITHER BY PUTTING A COVENANT TO MAINTAIN THE PRAIRIE IN THE DEED OR BY TRANSFERRING THE PRAIRIE TO THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

On November 2, 2010 the Ouabache Land Conservancy became a federally recognized non-profit corporation. The process started in August 2008 when Ouabache was registered as an Indiana Corporation, and finally ended with our successful responses to the three IRS requests for additional information. It has taken far longer than I ever thought it would, but now we can get on with the business of protecting and preserving the land and wildlife habitat in west central Indiana. Ouabache Land Conservancy is in business!

Starting in January, we plan to work with the Sycamore Trails Board to take over many of the services that the RC&D office staff has been providing for us as a Committee. We will also be arranging to transfer ownership of the Jackson/Schnyder Nature Preserve, the McDonald Conservation Easement and the Mossy Point Nature Preserve site monitoring responsibilities. Without the support and “sheltering” of Sycamore Trails RC&D, the creation of Ouabache Land Conservancy would have been almost impossible. Thanks to all who worked over these many years to make it happen.

We will be having our first Annual Membership Meeting January 28, 2011. Look for the details on the front page of this Newsletter and in forthcoming e-mails. Please come out for this historic event. Building our membership base is my first priority for this coming year.

Looking at the rest of the year, I want to continue our work on our Service Area Conservation Plan for the Wabash watershed, with emphasis on Otter Creek, by cooperating with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Wabashiki Fish and Wildlife Area, the Vigo County Parks Department, and continued involvement in the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan.

We will be moving forward with the three potential Conservation Easements that are in the works. Each of these properties are 100-150 acres in size, mostly wooded, and are justifiably cherished by their owners. Ouabache Land Conservancy will work with each owner to make a Conservation Plan for their property's protection from future development and other unwanted uses. We are looking for other properties that owners might like to donate or protect by establishing a Conservation Easement. If you know someone who might be interested, give me a call.

I intend to conduct all of the Ouabache Land Conservancy's business in accordance with the Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices. I will also continue to attend the Indiana Land Protection Alliance meetings to maintain our contacts and get the best ideas from our other Indiana Land Trust organization.

Please take a moment to write a generous check to renew your membership for 2011. Tell your friends about our new Land Trust. We would love to have you join our Board of Directors or Advisors and help us get on with the job.

I am looking forward to a very exciting year!

Dave Burns
OLC President



BOARD OF DIRECTORS – 2011

Board Meetings:

OLC’s board meetings are open to its general membership and to the public. They are held at 6:30 pm on the first Tuesday of each month in Room 205 of Indiana State University’s Science Building. Come join us!

Board elections were held December 7, 2010. The results are below:

<u>Officers</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Term Expires</u>	<u>Advisory Board</u>
Dave Burns	President	2012	Mary Beth Eberwein
Phil Cox	VP of Development	2011	Dan Griggs
Hansford Mann	VP of Programs	2013	Ted Harris
Bill Mitchell	Secretary	2011	Steve Herbert
George Bakken	Treasurer	2012	Marty Jones
			Mike Maloney
			Marshall Parks
			Patrick Ralston
			Peter Scott
			Gerald “Bud” Sharp
<u>Directors</u>			
Marion Jackson	Director	2013	
Gerald McGlone	Director	2013	
Karen Moffett	Director	2013	
John Whitaker	Director	2011	

Check out our newly launched website under construction at oubachelandconservancy.org!



Help us
protect the
natural lands
of our area!

Current
Members!
Don't forget
to fill out the
renewal form
on the back
of this page!



ABOUT OUABACHE LAND CONSERVANCY

The Ouabache (pronounced Wabash) Land Conservancy was founded in 2007 as a land trust. There are currently over 1,700 land trusts in the United States, 26 of which are in the state of Indiana. The function of most land trusts is to protect natural lands and farmlands from development. Some land trusts also focus on historic sites.

OLC serves west central Indiana, including Clay, Fountain, Montgomery, Owen, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties.

WANT TO BECOME A MEMBER?

Anyone can become a general member and supporter of OLC and we welcome all! We need more members and invite anyone to attend our meetings who has an interest in preserving natural and agricultural lands for future generations.

We currently meet at 6:30 pm on the first Tuesday night of each month in Room 205 of the Science Building on the Indiana State University campus in Terre Haute.

Ouabache Land Conservancy especially needs people whose love for nature would motivate them to serve on our board or on a committee. We can use individuals with naturalist knowledge, real estate skills, website or newsletter experience, connections to other organizations for outreach events, and many other areas, including enthusiasm to help where needed most.

Ouabache Land Conservancy
c/o George Bakken
4431 E Park Ave
Terre Haute, IN 47805-2057

Non Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Greencastle, IN
Permit No. 224

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2011

Yes! I want to become a member of Ouabache Land Conservancy to help with its important conservation work!

I am enclosing a tax-deductible contribution in the amount of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 \$2,500 \$5,000 Other amount: _____

New Member Membership Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home phone (_____) _____ Work phone (_____) _____

Cell phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

Would you prefer to receive newsletters & written communications via email _____ or hard copy via US Postal Service _____

Please make checks payable to "Ouabache Land Conservancy".

Mail to: Ouabache Land Conservancy
c/o George Bakken
4431 E Park Ave
Terre Haute, IN 47805-2057

