

# OUABACHE LAND CONSERVANCY

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Information about OLC can be found on our website at [ouabachelandconservancy.org](http://ouabachelandconservancy.org)  
Facebook & Instagram

## Mission Statement

To protect and restore land in west-central Indiana by providing habitat for native species, maintaining natural scenic beauty, and improving water and air quality; while offering education and enhancing the quality of life in our communities for future generations.



## *A Word From the President* *By Marty Jones*

Thirty-something years ago I was living in Indianapolis, Indiana. I helped a friend remove a barn from a family farm in an area referred to as Home Place in southern Hamilton County. This farm had been in the family for over 100 years; his ancestors immigrated overseas and eventually built a new life here in Indiana.

The farm was passed down from generation to generation and was finally one of the last farms to survive in the area. My friend decided to sell due to urban congestion, uncompetitive farming, high taxes, and land values too high to resist. Knowing the farm's future demise, he took parts of his barn and the family home and relocated to southern Indiana.

I occasionally drive by the old Home Place farm site. If not for a few notable landmarks, I wouldn't know where I was. The farm site now consists of high-density houses and streets. Stoplights, sidewalks, and resculpted land have reduced this farm to a place unrecognizable. Traffic noise has replaced the quietness and the sounds of singing birds. The development has erased every bit of evidence that this family had ever occupied this ground.

I'm sure this story seems all too familiar to you because we all have one very similar. My story has a little different ending. As I mentioned, my friend relocated to southern Indiana. The new family property has enormous natural intrinsic value. He remodeled the property's existing home and barn with some of the salvaged parts from the former property. Fortunately, their children do not have to face the same struggles their parents did because groups like the Ouabache Land Conservancy work to provide individuals, families, and communities a unique service in our way of treating the land.

## 2020 Programs & Activities

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Otter Creek Watershed Sec.  
319 Grant Project

Bridge, Fence, and Cleanup  
Project at AINA

Conservation Reserve Program  
at AINA

Invasive Species Weed Wrangle  
at JSNP

New Gate, Benches & Trail &  
Trail signs at JSNP

Summer Tallgrass Prairie Hike at  
JSNP

Fall Foliage & Prairie Hike at  
JSNP

Jackson-Schnyder Day at JSNP

## Protected Properties

### Fee Simple (complete ownership)

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Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve  
(Vigo Co) - 15 acres

Atherton Island Natural Area  
(Parke Co) - 188 acres

Sanctuary Oaks Nature Preserve  
(Sullivan Co) - 14 acres

It is more important than ever to help preserve places where plants, animals, and natural features can thrive. Like much of the state, west-central Indiana's natural resources are disappearing at an ever-increasing rate. Please consider giving generously to the Ouabache Land Conservancy. We are the leading organization in our six-county region that raises money to save the land. Your donations and membership are our primary revenue, so we depend heavily on your annual membership contributions. Let us come together to ensure that west-central Indiana's story is one that protects healthy communities where natural places thrive.



### *Otter Creek 319 Grant Update*

*By Dr. Michelle Marincel Payne,  
OLC Director*

We have good news on the IDEM 319 grant! While it was submitted in 2019, awarded in 2020, and still has an unknown start date, we hope we will be able to get started early-mid 2021! The

main goal of the grant is to implement the Otter Creek Watershed Management Plan to reduce nonpoint-source water pollution. The grant will last for 36 months and will bring over half a million dollars to be spent in the Otter Creek Watershed on best management practices to reduce water pollution. Most recently, OLC signed the contract for the IDEM grant agreement.

As part of this grant, OLC will develop and promote a cost-share program to implement best management practices (BMP) such as cover crops, nutrient management, prescribed grazing, water and sediment control basins in the critical areas described in the Otter Creek Watershed Management Plan. Once the cost-share program is established, OLC will also provide technical assistance through farm visits, conservation planning, BMP selection, and inspection of installed BMPs.

In addition, OLC will conduct an education and outreach program designed to bring about behavioral changes and encourage BMP implementation that will lead to reduced nonpoint-source pollution in the Otter Creek watershed. These activities will include workshops, field days, a Hoosier Riverwatch training, development of flyers and social media content, and collaboration with Rose-Hulman and ISU

## Conservation Easements

McDonald Farm (Vigo Co) - 371 acres

Haymaker Farm (Putnam Co) - 161 acres

Reynolds Property (Vigo Co) - 15 acres

Osburn Cliffs (Sullivan Co) - 38 acres

## Thank you OLC Non-Board Member Supporters!

John & Joyce Bacone

Rita Donham

Barbara (Peggy) Foster

Dorothy Goodwin

Bob & Joanne Haymaker

Elizabeth Haymaker

Ken & Teri Lorenz

Joe Newport

Paul & Cathy Newport

Clare & Greg Oskay

Scott & Nikki Royer

Brad & Ann Venable

David Voltmer

Barbara & Dan Weber

Anna White

technical communications classes to determine the awareness of the Otter Creek watershed and water quality issues in the area. Using social indicator baseline and end-of-study surveys, Rose-Hulman and ISU students will determine the impact of these educational and outreach activities.

Rose-Hulman students will also contribute via modeling in technical classes. These studies will include modeling of the impact of BMPs implemented in the Otter Creek watershed. ISU students will also monitor soil microorganisms (mites and springtails among others) to measure soil health and regeneration throughout the project.



### *Preservation and Restoration at Atherton Island Natural Area*

*By Dr. Jim Nardi, OLC Director*

At the end of the last glaciation, the retreating glacier left behind a massive moraine of gravel and sand that formed the elevated island bordered on the west by the Wabash River and on the east by Big

Raccoon Creek known as the Atherton Island land formation.

The present-day complex topography of the island has been molded by centuries of weathering of the moraine, creating ravines and ridges of all orientations and hillside slopes facing in myriad directions. The great differences in exposure to sunlight on these slopes have created subtle microclimates and shaped the diversity of habitats.

Many acres of its most rugged landscape have remained undisturbed and preserved. However, after the Ten O'Clock Line Treaty of 1809 ceded this portion of Indiana to white settlers, large tracts of the land marginal for growing crops were logged and converted to agriculture. Over two centuries of neglect and abuse, extensive erosion and human dumping took its toll on the more accessible acres of the landscape. Nature, however, is resilient; with OLC's restoration efforts the land is rapidly healing. In March, Kanizer Excavating removed tons of garbage that had been dumped and cleared the debris left at the old home site. We continue to remove the unsightly old fences that have

become entangled with vines and obstruct movement of wildlife.

Enhanced erosion of the stream banks due to planting of crops on the highly erodible land was responsible for the collapse of the wooden bridge located at a key junction connecting trails on the south side of the stream with trails on the north side. With the engineering expertise of Britton Luther and the



Crossing the new bridge is fifteen year-old Addison Jones and her dog named Julia.

practical experience of Tim Hall Excavating, we were able to replace the original wooden bridge with a handsome new aluminum bridge purchased from Rolling Barge Company in Estacada, Oregon.

Tall, straight black locust trees grow along the ravine carved by the south branch of the stream that flows through the middle of the natural area. These trees invaded this ravine after the native oaks and hickories were logged decades ago. Black locust happens to be one of the most decay-resistant trees; and the tallest and straightest among them were selected for construction of a rustic fence along the southeast border of Atherton Island Natural Area. In November, Tim Hall Excavating not only extensively pruned trees obstructing movement along the entrance road at this south border but also erected

the locust log fence - high enough to not only allow passage of wildlife under the logs but to also exclude off-road vehicles driving over the logs. The log barriers are low enough for deer to easily leap them and for humans to use them as benches that overlook the adjacent prairie planting. Finally, in December 2020, to culminate the year's news for Atherton Island Natural Area, OLC expresses gratitude for the litigation accomplishment by attorney Gerald McGlone as we were able to finally settle a longstanding real estate issue.

Next spring four acres of the formerly cultivated area in the southeast corner of the natural area will be transformed by planting pollinator habitat with about 40 species of native flowers, short prairie grasses, and sedges. On the remaining 36 acres, 19,600 one- and two-year old trees - mostly oaks and shagbark hickories - will be planted. With help from our farm neighbor Brad Stone, the land has been prepared for these restoration plantings. Several miles of new trails will circumscribe the mature forests of the deep ravines and the restorations on the ridges. Views from the trails will offer appreciation for the healing process of restoration and the beauty of natural succession from abandoned fields to mature forests.

Follow the Ouabache Land Conservancy on Facebook or visit our website at [www.ouabachelandconservancy.org](http://www.ouabachelandconservancy.org) as we plan for educational fun hikes and the grand opening of Atherton Island Natural Area in 2021.

## *Future Nature Preserve in Putnam County*

The Ouabache Land Conservancy is excited to announce that there will be a new nature preserve in Putnam County. The tract of land that is destined for Ouabache Land Conservancy's stewardship (via a Transfer of Death Deed) was purchased by Bob and Bill Wichmann in 1990. The tract contains 212 acres, with 80 acres in crop production and the rest in mixed hardwood forest. It has been in the IDNR Classified Forest & Wildlands Program for approximately 25 years, and has not been harvested since the Wichmann brothers started protecting it. The forest consists of deep cool ravines, abrupt limestone outcroppings, five major waterfalls, cliffs, and beautiful scenic overlooks of the creek. The unnamed tributary flowing through the woodlands has a solid limestone bed from end to end, as it flows, sometimes raging, north into Big Raccoon Creek. The stream is alive with small fish, crawfish, turtle, mink, belted kingfisher, wood duck, and great blue heron. The forest is a mix of shagbark hickory, sugar maple, red oak, white oak, chinquapin oak, burr oak, black oak, Ohio buckeye, yellow poplar, sycamore, black walnut; and to a lesser extent Kentucky coffee-tree, aspen, and butternut. The west-central conservation community is very grateful to the Wichmann brothers for their stewardship of this property for the last 30 years. The Ouabache Land Conservancy is excited, proud, and looking forward to working with Bob and Bill towards the preservation of the future Wichmann Woods Nature Preserve in perpetuity. Thank you, Bill and Bob, for saving this little piece of heaven in Putnam County!



Bill (left) and Bob Wichmann

## *2019 Marion T. Jackson Conservationist of the Year*

Hansford Mann, Jr., was named the Ouabache Land Conservancy's Marion T. Jackson Conservationist of the Year award honoree at a recent OLC Board meeting. Mann was one of the founding fathers of OLC and has been active on the Board of Directors since the beginning of 2007 (currently serving as V.P. of Acquisition). Presenting the award is Marty Jones, OLC President.



## *2nd Annual Jackson-Schnyder Day*

August 15th was a wonderful morning to remember the legacies of Dr. Marion Jackson and Julius Schnyder at the Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve by hiking through the prairie and woods. Without the protection granted by these men, this State-dedicated nature preserve would not have been possible. It was great to see so many descendants of Grandpa and Great Grandpa Schnyder there (The Newports). A big thank you to Joe Newport for continuing to mow and maintain the tallgrass prairie hiking path and the roadside. Thank you OLC VP of Stewardship, Amber Slaughterbeck, for organizing this annual event.



## *Fall Foliage Hike*

October 17th was a great day for the annual OLC Fall Foliage Hike at Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve. Dr. James Speer, Professor of Geography and Geology at Indiana State University and an OLC Advisory Board member, led the participants through the prairie and woods to celebrate the eleventh anniversary of the preserve's dedication as a State nature preserve. During the hike, Dr. Speer, and others, took a tree core sample of a red oak that was later determined to be at least 140 years old.



## *Schedule of 2021 OLC Events:*

March 26 - Shrub and Garlic Mustard Weed Wrangle  
at Sanctuary Oaks

April 17 - Spring Wildflower Hike at Atherton Island Natural Area (AINA)

April 24 - Garlic Mustard Weed Wrangle at Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve

June 26 - Weed Wrangle at Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve

July 17 - Tallgrass Prairie Hike at Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve

August 14 - Jackson-Schnyder Day at Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve

September 24 - Sanctuary Oaks Weed Wrangle

October 23 - Fall Foliage Hike at Jackson-Schnyder Nature Preserve

TBD - Annual OLC Member Meeting

Stay tuned to the OLC Facebook page and website for details.

### *Board of Directors - 2021 (and Term Expiration)*

Marty Jones - President, 2021

Adam Grossman - VP of Development, 2023

Amber Slaughterbeck - VP of Stewardship, 2021

Phil Cox - VP of Programs, 2023

Hansford Mann - VP of Acquisition, 2023

Ron Tyner - Treasurer, 2023

Lisa Baer - Secretary, 2021

Thomas Baer - Director, 2022

Brendan Kearns - Director, 2021

Susan Berta - Director, 2022

Michelle Marincel Payne - Director, 2022

Jim Nardi - Director, 2023

David Kluger - Director, 2023



### *Advisory Board*

George Bakken

Emily Bruner

Mary Beth Eberwein

Jeff Fisher

Dan Griggs

Ted Harris

T.J. Hellmann

Robert Jean

Carissa Lovett

Bill Mitchell

Mike Maloney

Gerald McGlone

Karen Moffett

Raoul Moore

Fred Nation

Larry Owen

Marshall Parks

Patrick Ralston

Keith Ruble

Jane Santucci

Peter Scott

Gerald "Bud" Sharp

Jim Speer

Jim Sullivan

Dennis Tarasi

John Whitaker

### *Honorary Advisory Board*

Jim McDonald

## *2021 Newly Elected Directors*



L-R, Hansford Mann, Phil Cox, Dr. Jim Nardi, and David Kluger

Photo by Carissa Lovett

OLC welcomes back Hansford Mann and Phil Cox after taking 2020 off from the OLC Board of Directors. In addition, OLC is excited to have Dr. Jim Nardi and David Kluger be newly elected to the Board starting in 2021. Jim is a research entomologist at the University of Illinois' School of Integrative Biology and has been the leading force in restoring Atherton Island Natural Area to its former splendor. David is a financial advisor in Terre Haute and has recently been active attending Board meetings and site visits to potential properties for OLC to protect. Welcome Jim and David!

## *Otter Reintroduction Success*

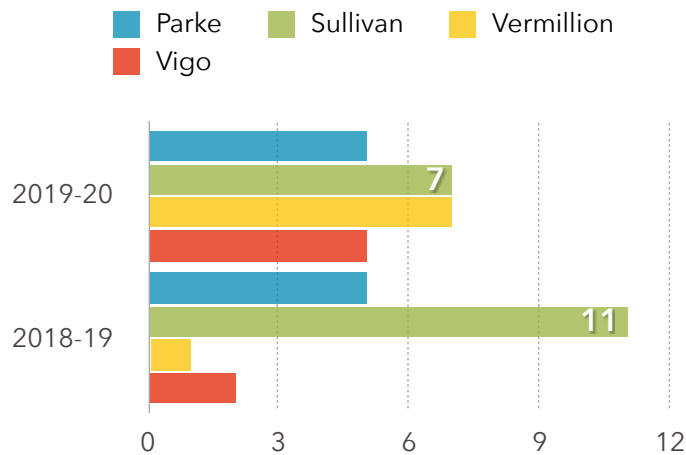
Like the beaver, otters were sought as furbearers by early European settlers. Native populations declined sharply by the mid 1800s due to loss of wetland and riverine habitats, human settlement, and unregulated fur harvest. Indiana moved to protect otters in 1921, but they were believed lost from the state by 1942. Between 1995-1999, Indiana's River Otter Reintroduction Program released 300 otters. The nearest Terre Haute/





Wabash River tributary release of otters was the 1998 release of 25 otters in Wabash County (Eel River) and the 1996 release of 26 otters in Pulaski County (Tippecanoe River). The only other nearby otter releases were in Jackson County and Orange County. Today, the otter is beginning to thrive once again in Indiana to the point where DNR allows an otter trapping season. The otter above was photographed by Marty Jones and Jim Sullivan in 2008 within the flooded Wabash River bottoms between Terre Haute and West Terre Haute, near Dewey Point. This photo documents the first otter sighting in Vigo County in at least 70+ years.

**Chart: Indiana DNR Otter Take in Parke, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties**



Did you know Otter Creek in northern Vigo County, was so named for the otters seen there by early settlers[1]?

1. *Blanchard, Charles (1884). Counties of Clay and Owen, Indiana: Historical and Biographical. F.A. Battey & Company. p. 17.*

## About Ouabache Land Conservancy

The Ouabache (pronounced Wabash) Land Conservancy was founded in 2007 as a land trust and was awarded non-profit 501(c)3 status in 2010. There are currently 1,363 land trusts in the United States, with about 24 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. For more information about land trusts visit [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org). OLC serves west-central Indiana, concentrating in Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties.

Want to become a member? Anyone can become a member and supporter of OLC and we welcome all! We invite anyone who has an interest in preserving natural lands for future generations to attend our meetings. Please see membership form on the back page or donate online via our website at [www.ouabachelandconservancy.org](http://www.ouabachelandconservancy.org).

OLC's board meetings are open to the general membership and to the public. They are held at 5:30 pm on the first Tuesday at the Dobbs Park Nature Center or the Vigo County Public Library, Terre Haute. During COVID, some meetings are held via virtual Zoom meetings. 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, financial and 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. Come join us!

*Please Join or Renew Your Membership for 2021*

Yes! I want to become a member (or renew) 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: \_\_\_\_\_

NewMember MembershipRenewal

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

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

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