

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 19, 2009

IAA contact: Susan Sullivan
317.487.5025 | ssullivan@indianapolisairport.com

HCPR contact: William Roche
317.718.6188 | wroche@hcparks.net

USFWS contact: Georgia Parham
812.334.4261, ext. 203 | Georgia_parham@fws.gov



Indianapolis Airport Authority



Airport board approves agreement with Hendricks Co. for 210 acre nature park

INDIANAPOLIS—A long-term agreement between the Indianapolis Airport Authority (IAA), Hendricks County Parks & Recreation (HCPR), and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) was approved by the IAA board this morning.

The agreement will authorize HCPR to establish, operate, and maintain a new nature park in eastern Hendricks County. It is expected to open for visitors who want to picnic, fish, hike, study, and enjoy nature in 2011.

The park will be developed on land owned by IAA in Guilford Township south of County Road 750 South and west of County Road 975 East. Just under 210 acres, the area includes a 5.5 acre pond fed by Hendricks Creek. A number of small streams meander through the area, which is predominantly woodlands and reforested areas along with open grassland and fields.

According to HCPR Superintendent William Roche, "We expect to establish five miles of hiking trails, a fishing pier, a wildlife viewing platform, picnic areas, and interpretive signage that will be used to educate park visitors on ecologically significant elements of the area. The park will also be the site of nature programs conducted throughout the year."

Roche noted eastern Hendricks County is an area in significant need of additional public park space. "Once established, this nature park will be an important community asset."

The as-yet-unnamed park is part of the 2000+ acre area that IAA operates as part of its Habitat Conservation Plan under a permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to ensure protection of the habitat for the federally endangered Indiana bat.

According to Lori Pruitt, biologist with the USFWS in Bloomington, "A maternity colony of bats inhabits this area. The females return annually and form a colony where each female bears and raises a single pup each year. The park will be managed to complement their habitat needs."

— More —

IAA established the area more than a decade ago to restore a prime foraging and roosting habitat for the bat. The airport and HCPR expect the park will serve as an outdoor research and educational “classroom” where more can be learned about the bat’s ecological contributions and value to central Indiana.

“The ecological value of bats is tremendous, especially for insect control. They can eat up to half their own weight nightly in insects, including those that are crop and forest pests,” Pruitt explained.

Added Greta Hawvermale, IAA’s director of environmental and engineering matters, “The nature park will not only continue the partnership between the airport, Hendricks County, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife in the continuing recovery of the Indiana bat, but it will also provide members of the community access to an extraordinarily rich area of natural resources.”

Hawvermale noted the three organizations will work together to ensure development of the park—and operations once opened—have minimal impact on the land and wildlife diversity that is native to central Indiana.

“The Indianapolis Airport Authority takes our responsibility to conserve natural resources and be a good community partner seriously. We are committed to making the project a success,” she stated.

Al Bennett, Hendricks County representative on the IAA board, is pleased the park will be available to the public. “The nature park will provide a place of enjoyment and an educational experience for local residents for many years. I’m thankful that my fellow board members supported the project. We trust the Hendricks County Park Board will use this acreage to develop a place that truly enhances our community.”

Please see the aerial photos and map on page 3 for details of the area.

For more information about the project, please contact any of the individuals listed at the top of page 1.

#

