



Jack's Defeat Creek Forest Legacy Tract, Indiana

March 2003

Legend has it, "There once was a man named Jack. He crossed the creek and never came back." In the 1820s settlement days of Ellettsville, a local legend refers to a man named Jack who attempted to cross the town's flood-swollen creek by horse. But the waters proved too much for the horse, and the two were swept away by the rushing water. Although the legend is unclear of the fate of either Jack or his horse, the creek he attempted to cross became known as Jack's Defeat Creek. Thanks to the Forest Legacy Program, settlement will no longer occur on a 3/4-mile stretch of the creek, a tributary of the White River.

On March 19, 2003, landowners Harmon Crone and Jerry Kinser were paid \$338,000 from the Forest Legacy Program for a conservation easement. This transaction was a bargain sale; the easement was valued at \$397,500 during the appraisal process. The easement, held by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, protects 225 acres of central hardwood forests along the creek from development.

Jack's Defeat Creek was once an excellent smallmouth bass/rock bass stream. Recent declines in water quality associated with urban runoff from Ellettsville and other pollutants have impaired this fishery. The town has begun the process of restoring the aquatic community. One of the primary concerns is the lack of forest buffers along much of the stream. The Jack's Defeat Creek Forest Legacy project provides permanent protection to nearly 3/4 mile of stream corridor. "Nearby Stinesville has a long and storied history in Indiana's limestone industry. Conservation of this land preserves part of this heritage as well as important riparian forests" said Dan Ernst, Assistant State Forester and Forest Legacy Coordinator.

Besides the shoreline and hardwood forest, the parcel includes an abandoned railroad grade and a 1-acre limestone block quarry hole abandoned during the Great Depression. The property's proximity to Ellettsville and Bloomington make this area subject to increasing development pressure. The property is in the heart of limestone and karst country and is dotted with several small sinkhole and cave openings.

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The Indiana Forest Legacy Program protects important forests from conversion to nonforest uses. These forests provide valuable forest products and essential wildlife habitat, protect water quality and karst resources, offer outstanding recreation opportunities, and provide the opportunity to continue traditional forest uses. A Federal-State partnership allows landowners to keep their land private while ensuring it remains forest forever through the use of conservation easements.



Even this abandoned bridge crossing over Jack's Defeat Creek in Indiana would be of no use to Jack if he attempted to cross the creek today.
Photo by Dan Ernst