



## River's Edge Forest Legacy Tract, Indiana

June 2003

**T**he River's Edge Forest Legacy project—a 77-acre hardwood forest with 1,800 feet of frontage along the Little Calumet River, located within the Lake Michigan watershed—is representative of the ecosystems found in the moraine area of northwest Indiana. The property is dotted with vernal and riverine wetland communities and mixed hardwood forests. Oaks, maples, tuliptree, black walnut, and other species typical of both the central hardwoods and northern hardwoods regions dominate the forest.

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Dan Ernst, Assistant State Forester

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The conservation easement, valued at \$167,000, was acquired in June 2003 and marks the second project in Indiana's Northwest Moraine Forest Legacy Area. The conservation easement, acquired from landowners Keith and Marry Ellen Lakin, is held by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

The parcel includes 18 acres of recently restored forest, which was retired from row crop agriculture in 2000 under the Conservation Reserve Program. The site is located 1 mile downstream from a protected heron rookery under the ownership of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Department of the Interior, and is 3 miles south of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

The protection of this area in rapidly developing Porter County will add to the sustainability of the Little Calumet watershed. It is hoped that additional

forested areas along the Little Calumet will also be protected in the future to provide a permanent forest linkage along the river system.

“I knew during my first visit to the property this was a special place. Later discoveries of salmon flashing upstream, vernal pools, and locally uncommon Kentucky coffee tree added to my excitement,” said Dan Ernst, Assistant State Forester and Indiana Forest Legacy Program Coordinator.

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.



Vernal pools on the River's Edge Forest Legacy Project in Indiana offers unique and critical breeding and survival habitats for amphibians each spring. Photo by Dan Ernst