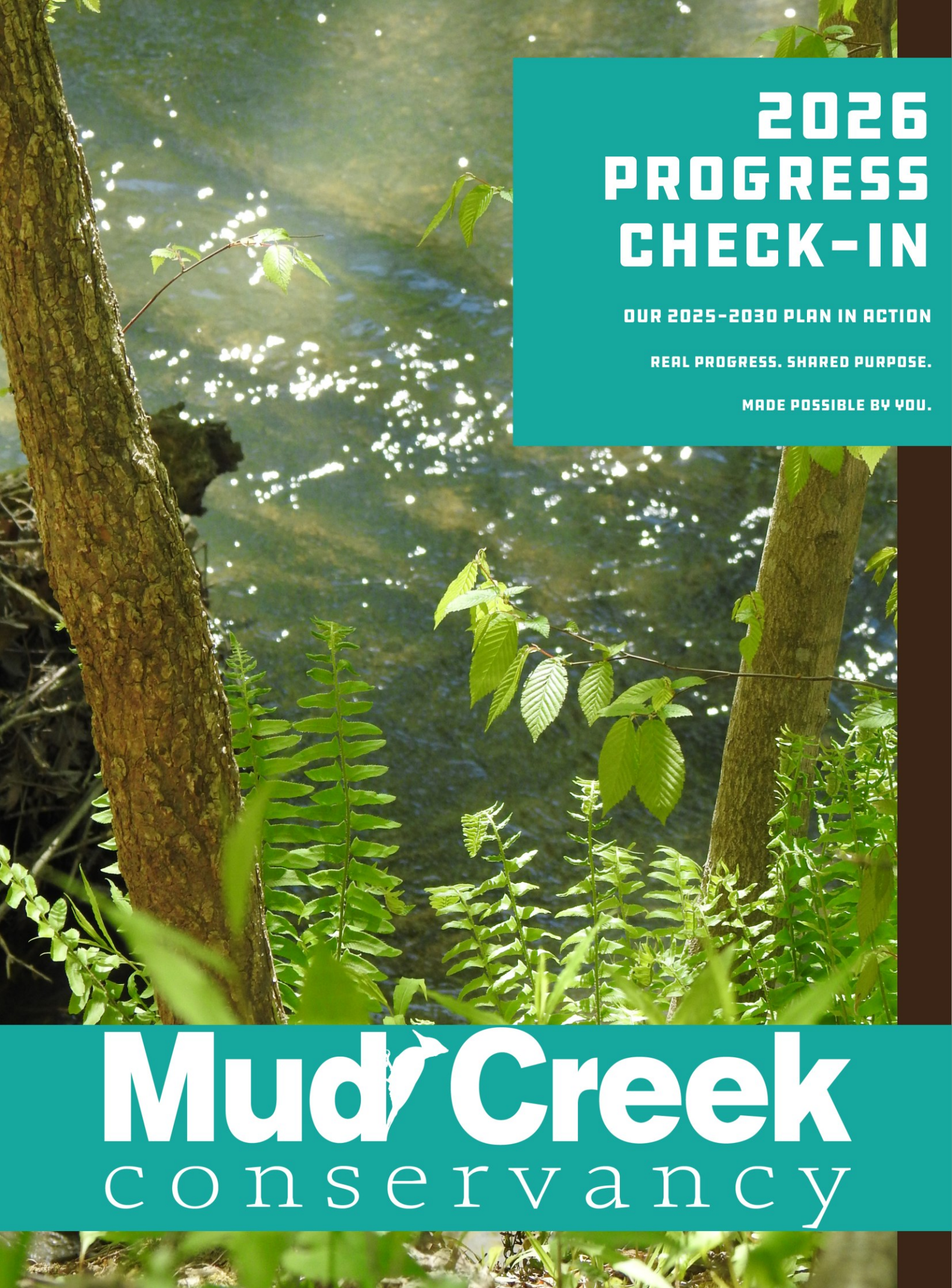


2026 PROGRESS CHECK-IN

OUR 2025-2030 PLAN IN ACTION

REAL PROGRESS. SHARED PURPOSE.

MADE POSSIBLE BY YOU.

Mud Creek conservancy

NOVEMBER 2025 - NOVEMBER 2026

YOUR SUPPORT. REAL PROGRESS.

Our 2025–2030 strategic plan is taking root. Your support is turning shared goals into protected land, healthier habitats and a community connected to nature.

View the full 2025–2030 Strategic Plan

1ST

PAID EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

More capacity to carry the mission forward.

2ND

PUBLIC NATURE PRESERVE IN DEVELOPMENT

Blue Heron Nature Preserve.

2.5 YEARS

SARGENT ROAD NATURE PARK

Open and enjoyed by the community.

3

NEW GRANTORS IN 2026

IN Audubon Mumford & Keller
Cox Conserves Heroes
Bioinventory: IN Academy of Science / ILPA / INPS

100+

NEW ACRES PERMANENTLY PROTECTED

A Madison County donation secured through 1.5 years of negotiation.

$100,000+

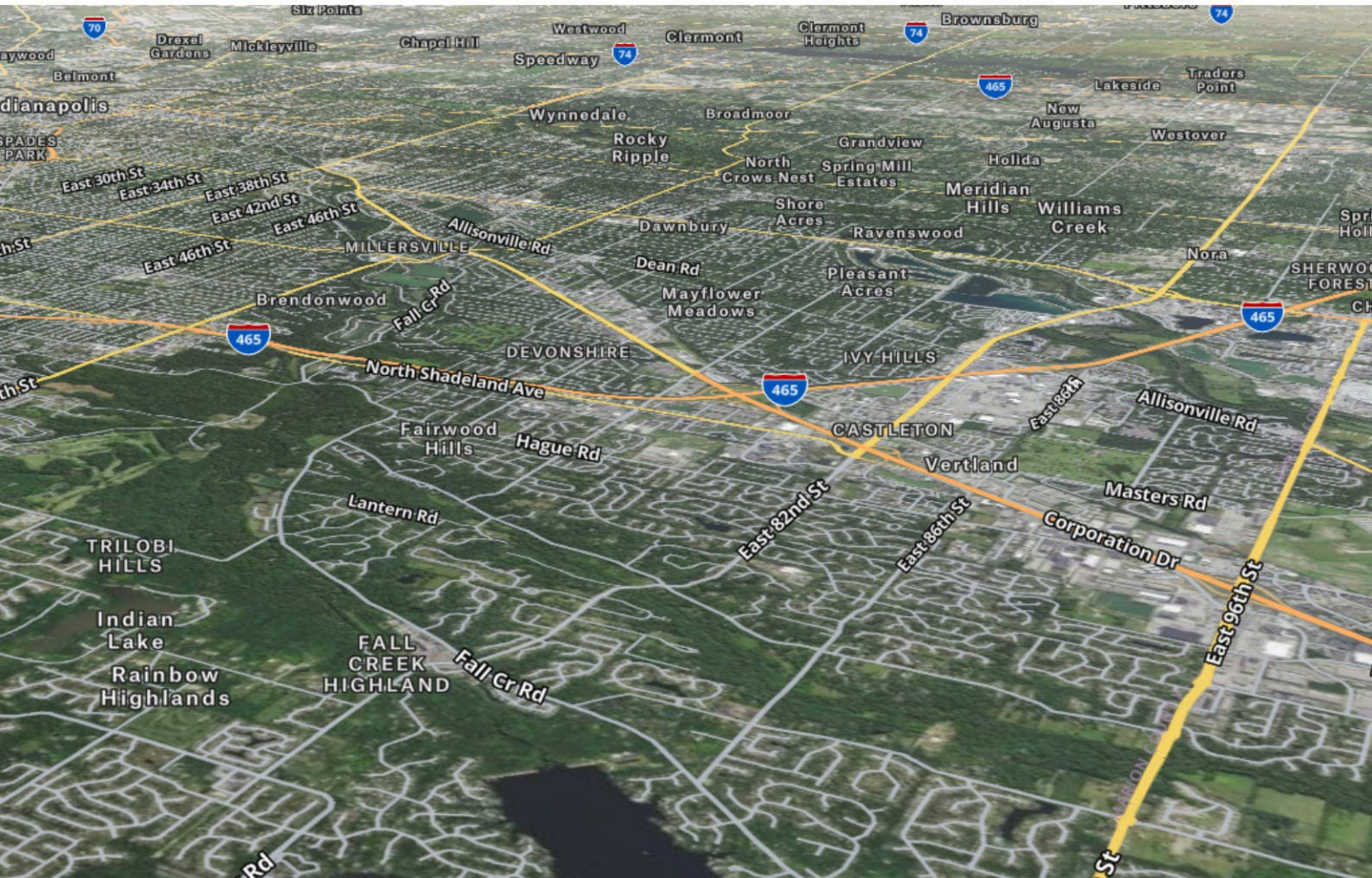
FOR BLUE HERON NATURE PRESERVE

$50,000 IHCDA grant
$50,000+ private match

200+

ATTENDEES AT 15+ EVENTS

New ways to learn, explore and belong in 2026.



AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

GOAL 1 | Help more people know and care about the Mud Creek Valley.

PLAN IN ACTION | 1.1 / 1.2 / 1.3

1ST NORTH AMERICAN RECORD

On dead box-elder twigs at Sargent Road Nature Park, naturalist Perry Scott found a lichen identified as Thelenella vezdae. Published this year, the discovery became the species' first recorded North American occurrence.

A tiny discovery with a big message: extraordinary nature can be hiding along a neighborhood trail. Protecting these woods gives us the chance to discover what is still here.

3 NEW GRANTORS IN 2026

New support came from IN Audubon's Mumford & Keller program and Cox Conserves Heroes, plus Bioinventory funding from the Indiana Academy of Science, Indiana Land Protection Alliance and Indiana Native Plant Society.

2 RADIO CAMPAIGNS. 2 ON-AIR INTERVIEWS. 2 GREAT ARTICLES.

MCC's first-ever public radio outreach on WTTS 92.3 grew into two campaigns and two on-air interviews with Matt Pelsor. IndyStar published print and video coverage highlighting MCC's mission, Blue Heron Nature Preserve's old-growth forests, and efforts to return a former swim club to a natural community amenity.

Listen: Matt Pelsor – Nature Prom (Sept 3)

Listen: Matt Pelsor – Cox Heroes (Sept 28)

Read: IndyStar – Blue Heron feature

Read: Amos Butler – Hidden Biodiversity



COX CONSERVES HEROES
Ben Miller | $15,000 for MCC



Hands-on discovery at MCC Earth Day.

SHARING WHAT WORKS ACROSS INDIANA

Ben Miller presented "Sargent Road Nature Park: Creating Welcoming Spaces" at the Indiana Land Protection Alliance annual conference, sharing MCC's approach with Indiana's land conservation community.

PRESERVATION

GOAL 2 | Protect more land and prepare for the next conservation opportunity.

PLAN IN ACTION | 2.1 / 2.3 / 2.4 + 5.3

100+ NEW ACRES DONATED IN MADISON COUNTY

In December 2025, the Anderson Land Ventures donation expanded MCC's protected holdings by more than 100 acres. A generous land gift became a long-term commitment to care for a much larger conservation footprint.

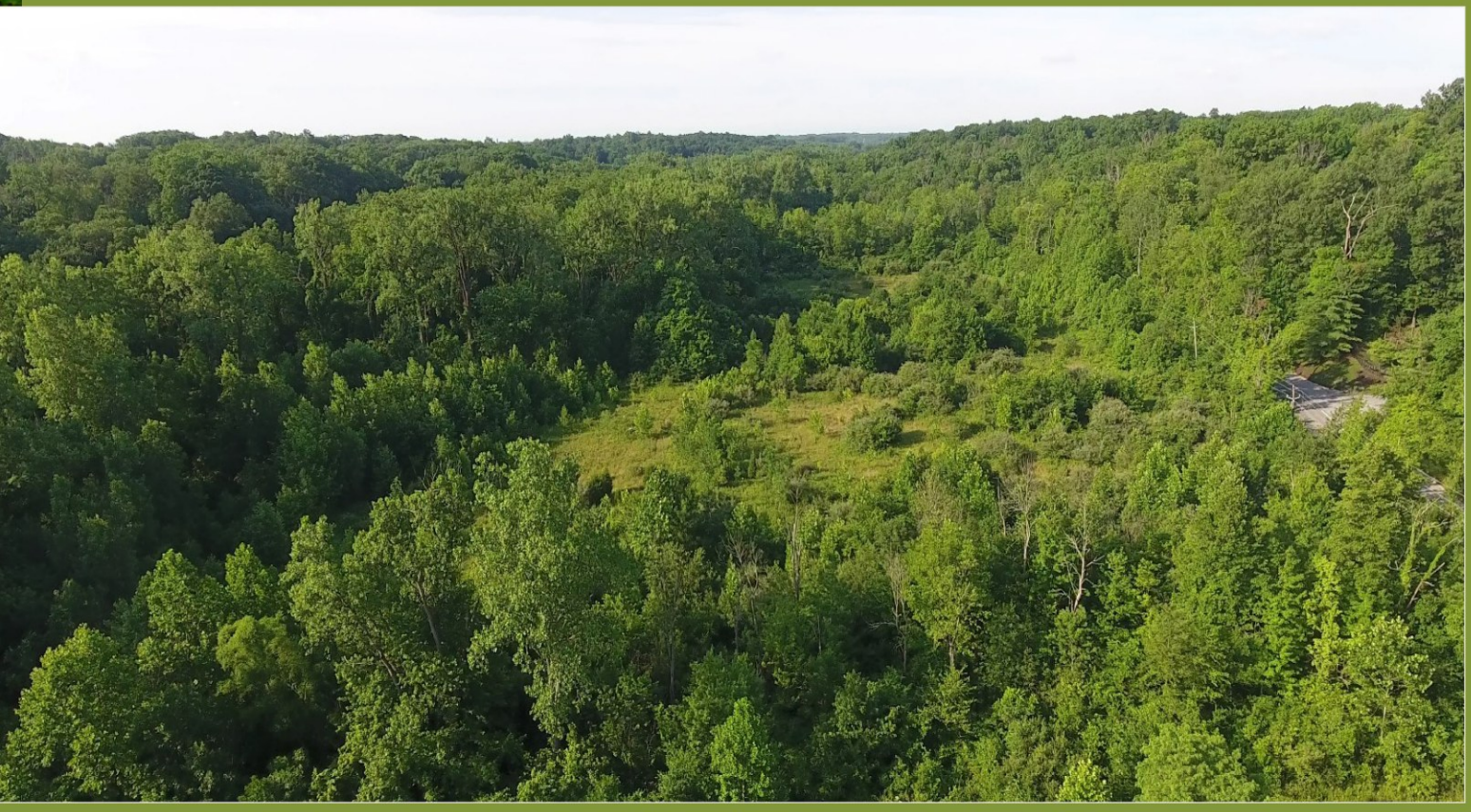
Land protection begins with trust: a landowner who believes in the mission, a community willing to stand behind it, and an organization ready to carry the responsibility forward.

$10,000 FOR EASEMENT COSTS

A restricted stock gift supports easement surveys and acquisition costs. New scoring tools and organized GIS records strengthen how MCC evaluates future opportunities.

PROTECTION IS A LASTING PROMISE

Landowner conversations and agency partnerships continue. Sustainable support helps us act when an opportunity arrives and steward land long after closing day.



RESTORATION

GOAL 3 | Help protected land thrive, and extend that care through the watershed.

PLAN IN ACTION | 3.1 / 3.2 / 3.3 / 3.4 / 3.5

NATIVE HABITAT TAKING ROOT

At Blue Heron, 2+ acres of upland-meadow and forested-wetland seed mixes are helping restore habitat. Native planting and invasive removal are moving the preserve toward a healthier future.

100 NATIVE SAPLINGS

Received for Earth Day distribution and Blue Heron planting, these trees connected habitat restoration with neighbors ready to make a difference.

CARE THAT CONTINUES ALL YEAR

Volunteers tackled invasive plants. Professional trail mowing, trimming and mulching kept Sargent Road welcoming. Easement walks and neighbor conversations supported responsible habitat management.

THINKING BEYOND THE PROPERTY LINE

MCC worked with the City of Indianapolis DPW and Sargent Road Association to secure a new crosswalk across 82nd Street to Sargent Road Nature Park and ensure native plantings and natural restoration in areas of MCC properties affected by Sargent Road drainage improvements.

$7,500 IN RESTORATION GRANTS

Earlier grants of $5,000 from Amos Butler Audubon's Birdathon and $2,500 from Indiana Audubon's Mumford & Keller program helped fund invasive removal and native restoration at Blue Heron.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

15+ PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS IN 2026

GOAL 4 | NEW WAYS TO LEARN, EXPLORE AND BELONG. | ACTIONS 4.1-4.4

SARGENT ROAD NATURE SERIES

JAN 18 | WILDLIFE TRACK IDENTIFICATION
Matt Shull – White Pine Wilderness Academy

FEB 15 | INVASIVE PLANT ID AND MANAGEMENT
Dawn Slack and Maria Smietana

MAR 15 | LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS
Nate Sils and Karin Maloney Anderson

APR 19 | INTRO TO CITIZEN SCIENCE
Aidan Rominger and Ben Miller

MAY 31 | ICONIC WETLANDS
Tom Swinford – Sycamore Land Trust

JUL 19 | HERPETOFAUNA OF THE MUD CREEK VALLEY
Rick Marrs and Jim Horton

AUG 16 | NATURE CONNECTION PRACTICES
Michelle Morton

SEP 27 | TREE CARE AND SPECIES SELECTION
Jerome Delbridge – ISA Certified Arborist

BEYOND THE SERIES

JAN 17 | BOARD GAME NIGHT
Lou Harry

MAR 28 | SING FOR SPRING
Mr. Daniel

APR 25 | MCC EARTH DAY FESTIVAL
Sargent Road Nature Park / Nature House

APR 26 | FEATHERS AND FERMENTATION
Wes Homoya / Indiana Audubon

JUN 21 | FATHER'S DAY OPEN HOUSE
Sargent Road Nature House

AUG 30 | INTRO TO FOREST BATHING
Michelle Morton

OCT 2 | NATURE PROM
Mark Booth and West Winds Big Band

OCT 10 | AUDUBON / ILPA BIG DAY HIKE
Aidan Rominger and Ben Miller

Also: Earth Day Indiana outreach booth at Garfield Park.

A NEW TRADITION. A STRONGER COMMUNITY.

Our first Nature Prom brought falconry, music, dancing and extraordinary generosity together: more than $20,000 raised and pledged. Across the calendar, learning became a reason to gather and a way to care more deeply about the places we protect.



Nature Prom: a new tradition of giving.


Learning together at the Nature House


Earth Day exploration

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

GOAL 5 | Build the capacity to keep the promise of permanent conservation.

PLAN IN ACTION | 5.1 / 5.2 / 5.3

1ST PAID EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ben Miller began as MCC's first paid executive director in November 2025. Employee payroll, stronger board reporting and improved operating systems are turning volunteer momentum into lasting organizational capacity.

$31,000 CONTRIBUTED

MCC contributed toward the Nature House mortgage payoff, while shared programs helped it fulfill its promise as a community and education space.

LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Maria Smietana and Ben Miller attended the Land Trust Rally in Denver, Colorado, in September for professional development and capacity building. Ben became ILPA president; peer learning and an organizational assessment are strengthening MCC.



BLUE HERON | ENTRANCE CONSTRUCTION

Community support becoming a welcoming place to explore.

$100,000 BLUE HERON CAMPAIGN MILESTONE

Gifts unlocked a $50,000 match. Parking is complete. Trail installation is underway, with opening planned for spring 2027.



Trail installation underway | November 2026

LOOK WHAT YOU HAVE MADE POSSIBLE

A MESSAGE FROM BEN MILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Our strategic plan began with a shared belief: the Mud Creek Valley is worth protecting, and this community can do something remarkable together.

This first check-in shows that belief becoming action. More land protected. Native habitat returning. New programs bringing people outside. A tiny lichen reminding us how much there is still to discover.

You made this possible. Our board, volunteers, landowners, donors and partners have carried an extraordinary amount of work alongside one paid staff position.

We can do a lot with a little. Imagine what we can do with dependable support.

Every new acre brings a lasting responsibility. Every new public space needs ongoing care. Project grants and special events help us make big leaps; recurring gifts help us keep showing up between those milestones.

Sustainable funding means more time for stewardship, more support for volunteers, and greater readiness when the next conservation opportunity arrives.

Thank you for helping turn our plan into a living promise.

Ben Miller
Executive Director, Mud Creek Conservancy



WHAT RELIABLE FUNDING MAKES POSSIBLE

CARE

Consistent habitat management, welcoming trails and attention to every property we protect.

CAPACITY

Staff coordination, trained volunteers and the systems a permanent conservation mission needs.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

More readiness to protect land, expand learning and bring Blue Heron fully to life.



BECOME A VALLEY GUARDIAN

Become a Valley Guardian or continue your commitment with an annual gift of $1,000 or more.

OUR SHARED GOAL FOR 2027

100

VALLEY GUARDIANS

$250,000

IN DEPENDABLE ANNUAL SUPPORT

VALLEY GUARDIANS	ANNUAL COMMITMENT
50	$1,000+
30	$2,500+
15	$5,000+
5	$10,000+

$50,000

IN SPECIAL PROJECT SUPPORT

Small and large gifts.

See MCC's Giving Guide, to be published Giving Tuesday 2026.

$300,000 COMBINED SUPPORT

ONE EXTRAORDINARY VALLEY.

You have seen what a little can do. Help make the next chapter possible.

JOIN OR RENEW FOR 2027.

BenMiller@MudCreekConservancy.org

317-964-3044

MUD CREEK CONSERVANCY
VALLEY GUARDIAN

BECOME A

VALLEY GUARDIAN

JOIN OR RENEW FOR 2027

100 VALLEY GUARDIANS

$250,000

IN DEPENDABLE ANNUAL SUPPORT

GUARDIANS NEEDED	ANNUAL GIFT
50	$1,000+
30	$2,500+
15	$5,000+
5	$10,000+

CARE FOR PROTECTED LAND. RESTORE NATIVE HABITAT.
WELCOME NEIGHBORS INTO NATURE. BE READY TO PROTECT MORE.

ADD YOUR NAME TONIGHT

SIGN THE COMPANION POSTER TO SHOW YOUR INTEREST.
YOUR SIGNATURE IS SYMBOLIC, NOT A BINDING COMMITMENT.

EMAIL OR CALL BEN MILLER TO ARRANGE YOUR PLEDGE OR DONATION METHOD.

BENMILLER@MUDCREEKCONSERVANCY.ORG

317-964-3044

VALLEY GUARDIAN ANNUAL SUPPORT IS SEPARATE FROM SPECIAL-PROJECT GIFTS.