

March 20, 2009

Newport Chemical Depot Local Reuse Authority
c/o Vermillion County Economic Development Council
2250 N. Main Street
Clinton, IN 47842

RE: Notice of Interest for use of the Newport Chemical Depot by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Less than 4% of the land of Indiana is available for public use. This is especially true in the Central portion of Indiana. It would be the intention of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (Department) to manage approximately 7,000 acres of the Newport Army Ammunition Plant (NAAP) less the developed industrial area (approximately 1,500 acres) specifically for natural ecosystem protection, hunting and fishing as well as other compatible public uses.

The management process would require that vegetation regimes, approximately 3,353 acres, currently in grass or farm fields be periodically disturbed so as to maintain the conditions of these lands in an early stage of vegetative succession. This would typically be accomplished by using minimal agricultural practices, fire, etc to maintain vegetative condition in stages at something less than seen in woodlands. The Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) will convert the existing large agricultural lands into smaller units of wildlife habitat over a period of several years. It is imperative that soil disturbance practices such as the typical small agricultural operations be implemented and maintained in order to retain value for upland wildlife. It is the intent there be steady progress on this conversion to small agricultural processes, but it is noted that this will take several years to complete. As we are going through that conversion process, we would continue to keep a portion of the land in agricultural row crop production of small size to affect plant succession so to create plant regimes necessary for optimum upland wildlife production. Tenant farmers are a common practice on our wildlife management areas and are used to maintain the plant succession at an optimum stage for upland species.

Approximately 213 acres are described as wetland. However most of this is described as being along creeks and the Wabash River. These acres would be retained as creeks and river frontage. The area along the Wabash River affords some special opportunity to provide river access to our fishing public as well as boat access for other recreational interests. We would plan to construct a boat launching facility somewhere along the Wabash River. The section of the Wabash River included in this project is within the project area of concern of the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission (WRHCC) and will offer opportunity for the Department to collaborate with this organization. This commission seeks to protect and enhance the natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources along the river. The Department would partner with WRHCC to provide the most appropriate Wabash River access.

Approximately 2,080 acres are in woodland and would be managed as such for forest wildlife species.

The DFW currently operates 21 fish and wildlife areas across the State providing approximately 150,000 acres for use by the public. Funding for our wildlife management efforts comes from the sale for hunting, fishing and trapping licenses. A property of this size would normally employ a biologist/property manager, one clerical and several laborers. Some seasonal workers may also be hired. Benefits to the local community would include several new jobs necessitated by the need to actively manage the property. This active management regime would require expenditures for parts, materials and supplies to sustain the property staff and equipment. Additionally, there would be the intangible benefit of having wild open space available to the citizens of the immediate community that would enhance their quality of life.

A more tangible benefit would be the economic boost provided by both resident hunters and out-of-state hunters coming to use the property. It is anticipated that the property would be managed to enhance wildlife populations at levels targeted to support higher hunting-use opportunities than the surrounding private lands. This management model typically attracts hunters. The Newport property has the potential to become one of the most popular upland game bird areas anywhere in Indiana. It should be noted that properties of similar size and varieties of recreational opportunities normally host approximately 50,000 to 75,000 wildlife related user-days, which includes about 5,000 hunter days. Approximately \$2.2 billion is spent on wildlife related recreation in Indiana annually, or about \$56 per user-day.

In addition to hunting, the property could develop into a popular destination spot for wildlife watchers. According to the 2006 National Survey on hunting, fishing and other wildlife associated recreation; Indiana had 1.8 million citizens that considered themselves as wildlife watchers. The creation of this unique combination of grasslands, forests and wetland habitats, and the close proximity to the North-South migratory bird corridor (flyway), has a high likelihood of bringing a wide variety of wildlife species to the area for public viewing.

This property has the potential to become a premier destination for a wide variety of outdoor enthusiasts. While the property would be primarily managed for upland bird hunting, the unique combination of habitat types would allow for the pursuit of deer and turkey as well. The aquatic attributes of the property will provide anglers, boaters, canoeists and waterfowl hunters the opportunity to get out and enjoy the Wabash River. Rare and unique plant species will also attract Hoosiers to enjoy spring flowers, grasslands and species that are hard to find elsewhere. And finally, wildlife watchers will be able to enjoy wildlife in their natural environment. In today's fast paced world, the ability to enjoy Indiana's tremendous wildlife resources, on a rare and unique property such as Newport, should not be underestimated.

Approximately 1760 acres in the NW corner of the site are of particular interest to the Division of Nature Preserves and have been identified as a priority protection area based upon a concentration of high value conservation targets. Two wooded drainage systems

currently separated by agriculture would be connected with a prairie and wetland restoration to recreate the presettlement landscape mosaic most beneficial to both game and non-game species of native wildlife and plants. Within the above two wooded drainages, approximately 550 acres of the highest quality forest communities could be dedicated as nature preserves. This area harbors many of the sites more uncommon species. All of this area would still be available for hunting.



American ginseng and yellow ladies-slipper orchids can still be found in the Newport facility's woodlands

Presettlement Conditions: 150 years ago, the land occupied by the Newport Chemical Depot looked quite differently than it does today. Much of the property was covered in rolling tallgrass prairie spreading out and over the broad terraces of the Wabash here in Vermillion County. Rich woodland groves lined the valleys of the smaller tributary streams dissecting the prairie plain. Prairie, woodland, wetland, small stream and big river ecosystems all came together here, resulting in a landscape mosaic of great interest and home to many unique plants and animals, many of which are very rare.

Prairie restoration: While the prairies of Vermillion County have largely been converted to agriculture, the critical silt loam soils and significant woodland remnants remain intact. Opportunities to restore entire landscapes of this significance are very few and provide great purpose to our work.

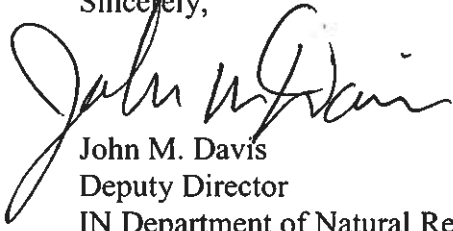
At one time 14 percent of the State of Indiana was covered with prairie grasses. Today less than one-tenth of one percent exists. Today, in the 21st century, prairies and the grassland animals dependent upon them are considered globally threatened. The importance of prairie to endangered grassland species, floodwater retention, groundwater recharge, watershed protection, return of carbon to soils, erosion control, and aesthetics, among many other realized benefits, has caused prairie conservation to become an increasingly important issue. A restoration of prairie on this scale would be of national significance.

The accompanying map delineates the boundaries of the NAAP which includes an interior dashed red line to indicate the general maximum area that may be considered industrial due to past activities at NAAP. Reuse of the former industrial area for new commercial or industrial purposes is compatible with the Department's uses described above.

The Department of Natural Resources is a flexible and creative partner with communities all across Indiana. We hope to work closely with the local Reuse Authority, the Vermillion County Commissioners and County Council, local economic development authorities, and your consultants to make the reuse of NAAP most beneficial to the citizens of Vermillion County and the State of Indiana.

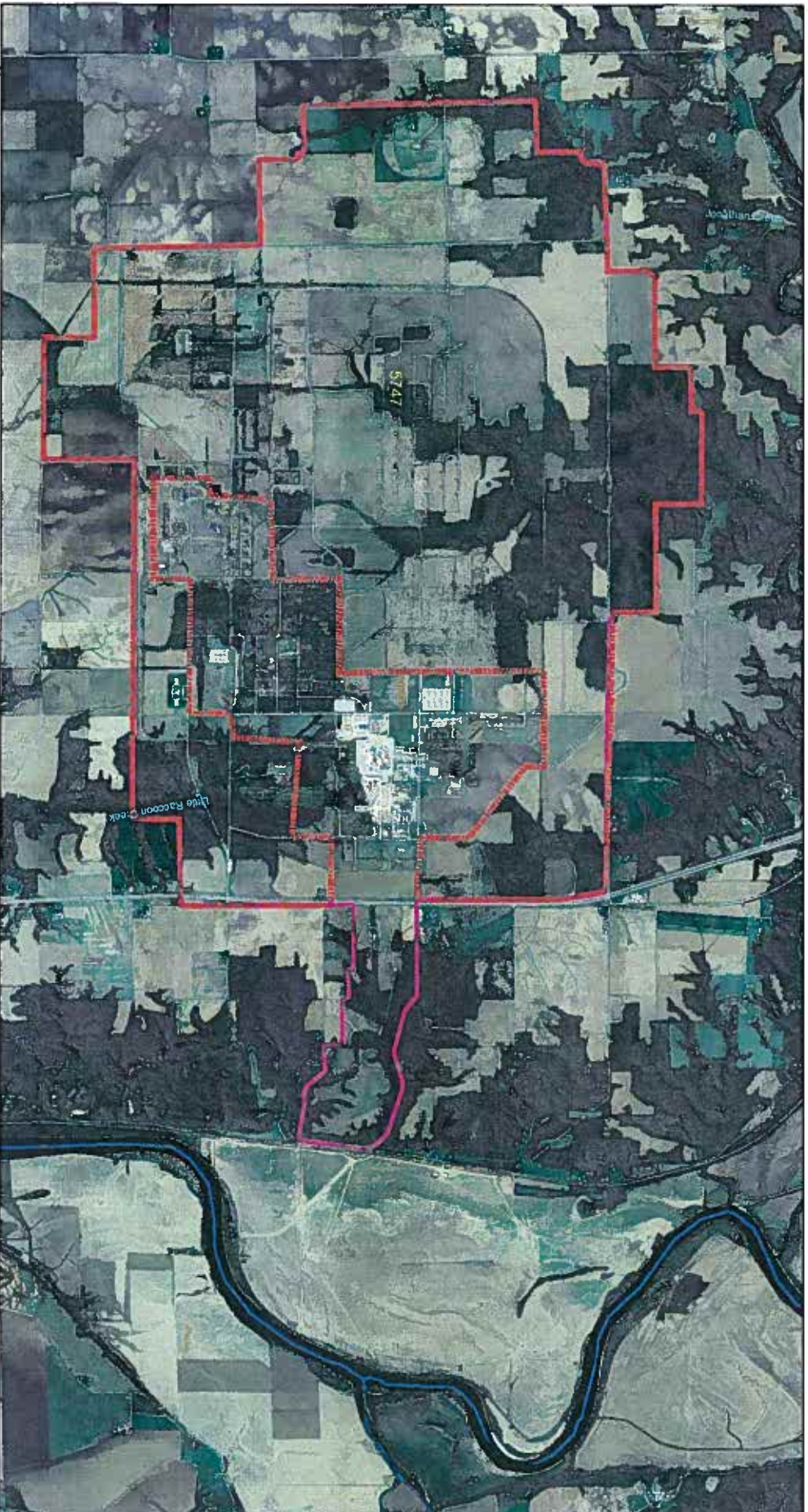
Please contact me if you have any questions or for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Davis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent part.

John M. Davis
Deputy Director
IN Department of Natural Resources
402 West Washington Street – Rm. 256
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-4025

IDNR potential 5,747 acre configuration (dashed red line)
to include access to Wabash River
Newport Chemical Depot DoD Vermillion Co



map created by T Swinford 19 Mar 09