

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE AND POSTING**

From: Hamilton County Parks and Recreation, Indiana  
400 Lafayette Road  
Noblesville, IN 46060  
(317) 770-4400  
MyHamiltonCountyParks.com  
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### **CILTI Transfers Much-needed Land to Hamilton County Parks**

A number of factors, organizations, and individuals were involved in the significant transfer of land in Hamilton County by Central Indiana Land Trust, Inc. (CILTI) to Hamilton County Parks and Recreation (HCPR). The transfer will result in the county park department gaining 129 acres of non-developed land, referred to as Burr Oak Bend, which is comprised of land parcels that are adjacent to and near an existing canoe landing the park department currently owns and maintains.

The amount of land transferred will permit HCPR to provide increased public access and expanded passive recreation opportunities in and around Riverwood Canoe Landing, located on the banks of White River at 20814 Riverwood Avenue, in Noblesville. Additionally, the overlapping stewardship objectives of both CILTI and HCPR will ensure the continued preservation and protection of the land in perpetuity.

The complex transaction was set in motion seventeen years ago when CILTI first provided the land on which the park department created Riverwood Canoe Landing - a public access point to White River. Measured access was achieved then by the installation of a path through the wooded bank area to the river and serviced by a small parking lot off Riverwood Avenue. The original funding CILTI used to purchase the land came from a settlement from the White River fish kill in 1999. At a later date, Steve Schwartz, now a respected member and President of the Hamilton County Council, who also serves as the Council's Park Liaison, along with his wife Lori, deeded one of the six parcels of land that now comprise what is known as Burr Oak Bend to CILTI, to ensure its proper care, for the benefit of the Hamilton County community. That parcel of land was included in the recent transfer.

Another environmentally aware organization involved in the transfer, Friends of Hamilton County Parks, Inc., recognized the benefits of increasing community access to the land, as well. Members on the "Friends" board, learning that use of the canoe landing had far exceeded its capacity during the pandemic, moved to provide a portion of the funding necessary for the land transfer.

Director of Hamilton County Parks and Recreation, Chris Stice states, "this land transfer is made all the more important, knowing that the Indiana Department of Natural Resources lists Hamilton County as a CRITICAL County - a designation that identifies the county as significantly lacking in parkland, based on the ratio of available park space to the population it should sustain." Stice continues, "We are truly grateful to Cliff Chapman, CILTI's Executive Director and Stephanie Paine Crossin, the organization's Land Protection Manager, for the roles they played in making this land transfer possible, as well as our visionary elected officials and all of those groups and individuals that supported this important transaction."

HCPR's goal to provide passive recreation to Hamilton County residents, central to its mission, will be achieved by the installation of strategically placed, multi-use trails on the newly acquired land, serviced by a minimum of access points that accommodate a limited number of users' vehicles.

No timeline has been set for trail development at this time. Stice anticipates that, when completed, the trails will be used and enjoyed for wildlife viewing, photography, nature education programming, running, walking and a host of other quiet recreation activities, for years to come.

To learn more about the critical mission of CILTI, and how you can support the not-for-profit's efforts, visit [ConservingIndiana.org](http://ConservingIndiana.org). For more information about Friends of Hamilton County Parks, Inc. visit [FriendsofHamiltonCountyParks.org](http://FriendsofHamiltonCountyParks.org). And find out more about Hamilton County Parks at [MyHamiltonCountyParks.com](http://MyHamiltonCountyParks.com), or on the department's facebook page, or by calling 317-770-4400.