

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

Hoosier Hills and Highlands Oak Community Restoration Partnership

2016–2018



Collaborative Oak Management in the Appalachian Mountains

The Central Hardwoods Region of the U.S. covers an area roughly from Missouri to West Virginia. Once dominated by oaks and hickory, these iconic forests have slowly declined and are being replaced by different shade-tolerant species. Fire suppression and other land management practices have contributed to the current state. This decline affects not only the trees but the herbaceous species and wildlife that depend upon their persistence. In Southern Indiana, the Central Hardwoods Region harbors many federally listed bats, birds, cave-dwelling species, and other wildlife. The region also supplies water to many local communities before flowing to the Ohio River and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico. Conservation of the woods, wildlife, and water takes a coordinated approach across land ownerships. This Joint Chiefs' project brought together Hoosier National Forest, NRCS, local Conservation Districts, Department of Defense, The Nature Conservancy, and landowners. Central to these reforestation efforts was non-native invasive species removal, targeted mechanical vegetation treatments, and native tree planting.

PROJECT IMPACT:

\$3.7 million

USFS & NRCS JCLRP funds awarded 2016–2018: \$4,070,029
Total USDA and partner project funds: \$4,365,472

Dollars injected into local rural economies through forestry job opportunities, retail spending, and infrastructure.

PROJECT RESULTS



Indiana hardwood forest after mid-story canopy treatments



Non-native invasive species removal:

16,100 acres of enhanced oak forests.



Oak forest restoration:

9,600 acres of mid-story canopy plant removal.



Improving wildlife habitat:

planted approximately 60,000 native plant seedlings.

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

Photos in this document are public domain or stock imagery unless otherwise noted.

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HOOSIER HILLS AND HIGHLANDS OAK COMMUNITY RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP



Surveying for stream restoration to improve fish passage and sediment transport

The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Initiative - Indiana

Along the hills and hollows of southern Indiana lie some of the most heavily forested and biologically diverse woodland systems in the Central Hardwoods Region. Known for harboring federal and state-listed bats, birds, cave-dwelling species and other declining wildlife, this area was once historically dominated by oak species. As time passed and land management efforts fell by the wayside, the forests began shifting toward dense stands of shade-tolerant species that have led to a decline in oak regeneration, loss of understory floral diversity and a decrease in quality wildlife habitat.

With the addition of the Hoosier Hills and Highlands Oak Restoration Partnership, this area is slowly returning to its native habitat. Forestry practices for NRCS across the entire state have seen a significant increase since 2015 but more importantly, the implementation of forestry practices roughly tripled in the restoration area.

In response to the increase in workload, private consulting foresters responded to the demand by becoming Technical Service Providers (TSPs) for NRCS. Since the project's creation, five additional consulting foresters have become certified TSPs with three more located just outside of the project's boundary. Many of the private consulting foresters within this area have hired new employees to keep up with workload generated by the restoration initiative. Additionally, four federal employees were hired to implement the project along with other forestry management projects generated from this restoration initiative.

The success of this project directly benefited rural local economies by supporting consulting foresters, TSPs, forest contractors, loggers, mills and landowners. The combined efforts of the partner agencies and organizations generated an understanding of the conditions of local forests and supported the threats facing residents and regional interests.

For more information, please visit nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports



Oak leaves on the forest floor

Key Partners

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
The Nature Conservancy
Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Contact

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