

**Minutes of Initial Meeting of the Sustainable Natural Resources Task Force**  
**9:30 a.m., August 31, 2011**  
**Statehouse Room 156 C**

**Members present:** Representative Mike Karickhoff; Representative Phil Pflum; Ray McCormick, Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Robert Woodling, Indiana Forestry and Woodland Owners Association; Bill Weeks, Indiana Land Trust Alliance; Dave Wyeth, Indiana Farm Bureau; Mary McConnell, The Nature Conservancy; and Steve Cecil, Indiana Wildlife Federation. **Not present:** Senator Doug Eckerty and Senator Richard Young.

**Others present:** Senator Phil Boots; Chris Smith, Legislative Liaison DNR; Megan Ritter; Jennifer Boyle Warner; Barb Simpson; Angela Hughes, and Lynn Dennis.

**1. Introductions.**

Chris Smith, Legislative Liaison for DNR, opened the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves.

**2. Senator Boots:** a) review contents of the bill and key deliverables; b) discuss the background of the Task Force; and c) importance of conservation

Senator Boots reviewed the bill for the task force. He stressed the importance of examining the activities of conservation organizations and agencies and the importance of working together, promoting best practices and ensuring Indiana fully leverages federal funding. He noted the Task Force's charge to collect programmatic and funding data from other states and to perform a needs assessment. He suggested the task force focus on the most important things and reach out to farmers and educate them on best practices and available programs. He noted the quality of our streams is an indication of the need to do better, and the need for clean water, forests and open space. He suggested that it is expected that the legislative members of the task force will take what is learned back to their respective caucuses.

The point was raised that the bill did not call for any legislation. Senator Boots confirmed that indeed a recommendation of legislation by the task force was appropriate if their work leads them there.

**3. Elect a Chair.**

Chris explained that the bill required the members of the Task Force to elect a chair. He asked for nominations. Mary McConnell nominated Bill Weeks and Dave Wyeth seconded it. The voice vote was unanimous by members present.

**4. Discuss definition of natural resources and scope of project.**

The chair opened the meeting for discussion about the scope of the project after conferring with Chris about the lead time needed by agencies to prepare their presentations about component of their programs and funding. Information will be sought from both agencies and conservation groups.

There was lengthy discussion about the scope of inquiry: what natural resources are we talking about? The members shared varying ideas, including air, land, soil, coal, water, vegetation and water flow. Others focused on issues such as soil loss, nutrient reduction, conservation lands, places to recreate, economic connection and quality of life, confined animal feeding operations and impacts on water quality and drainage, importance of considering the huge growth in population and the need for food production.

It was suggested that a streamlined way to approach this project is in the two tasks: data collection and needs assessment. The needs assessment is the crux of the matter and will take the most time and effort to bring

something forth that is useful. A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) was suggested as well as the need for a mission statement, an overarching picture.

The members discussed the importance of considering the economy as they progress. A discussion ensued about the current boom in the rural economy and increased global population and what this will mean for natural resources.

The members' discussion changed as it was noted that the members needed to remember the charge and scope of this group and the reality of what it can tackle. The discussion came back to identifying weakness and priorities in the complex web of natural resources.

**5. Discuss the role of workgroups.**

It was decided before workgroups are developed more information needed to be collected.

**6. First steps and assignments.**

The chair noted that in addition to collecting data from other states and the needs assessment, the task force would be compiling findings and make recommendations to the Natural Resources Study Committee, as well as prepare a report card of the health of natural resources.

The members decided that the next meeting would be set aside for state agency reports. Those reports will set the foundation for a SWOT. It was suggested that the agencies be asked to prepare their presentations in a SWOT format. The chair will work with Chris to send letters to the agencies.

Staff from the NGO representatives shared a "Comparison of Surrounding States Natural Resources Programs and Funding Mechanisms" they had been prepared to assist the task force in their work. They offered to make changes or do any additional research requested.

**7. Future Schedules and potential agenda items.**

The next meeting was set for Wednesday, September 28 at 10 a.m. in Indianapolis, place to be determined. DNR, ISDA and IDEM will make presentations. The third meeting will be on Wednesday, October 26 at 10 a.m., place to be determined.

Earlier the chair discussed potential to have a meeting in northern and southern Indiana. Another suggestion was offered that certain federal agencies should be invited to make presentations at a future meeting.

Final thought was a suggestion that another component for the task force to consider is education on the value of natural resources.

**8. Adjourn**