



CLEAR THINKING

CLEARLAKECONSERVANCY.ORG

SUMMER 2026 | ISSUE: 66



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Photo by Rory Kramer

Making the Most of Every Clear Lake Moment

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Summer is in full swing here in the northeast corner of Indiana, and once again, Clear Lake Township is alive with activity. From sunrise paddles and afternoon swims to golf cart rides, neighborhood gatherings, card games and lakeside cookouts, this special season reminds us why so many families have created lasting memories here for generations.

What makes our community even more remarkable, amid all these treasured moments, people continue to invest their time and energy in caring for the place we all love. Your support of local conservation and environmental education helps ensure that future generations will enjoy the same clean water, healthy forests, abundant wildlife, and beautiful shorelines that make Clear Lake so remarkable.

This spring, we launched our new Volunteer Fridays stewardship program, and the response has been inspiring. During May and June, volunteers planted native wildflowers, removed invasive plants, mulched restoration areas, and improved our public trails. Together, 27 volunteers donated 54 hours to caring for our community's natural spaces. Volunteer Fridays will return every Friday in August with information on our website, and we'd love to have you join us.

Another exciting initiative is coming soon—a new online Water Quality Dashboard for Clear Lake. The dashboard will provide near real-time information from our major inflows, including the Cyrus Brouse and Harry Teeters ditches, as well as the outflow at the Round Lake Dam. Visitors will be able to view water temperature, flow rates, lake level, and other monitoring data, updated approximately every 15 minutes. It's another way we're helping our community better understand and care for the waters that connect us all.

Of course, one of the highlights of the summer has been Run Day, Fun Day, when neighbors, friends, sponsors, and volunteers came together to celebrate community while raising funds for local conservation. The smiles, encouragement, and enthusiasm on display were a wonderful reminder that protecting Clear Lake is truly a community effort. Turn to Page 3 for photos and highlights from this memorable day.

Whether you're spending your days on the water, exploring a Conservancy trail, volunteering at a stewardship project, or simply enjoying a peaceful evening by the lake, thank you for being part of the Clear Lake community. Together, we're protecting the places we love and creating a legacy that will benefit generations to come.



CAROLINE BARTH
Executive Director



BARB WENGER
President



Photo by Terry Brown

EVENTS

RUNNING FOR CONSERVATION AT RUN DAY, FUN DAY!

Wow – what an incredible day! On **July 11**, our community came together once again for **Run Day, Fun Day**, celebrating fitness, friendship, and conservation. We are deeply grateful to every sponsor, volunteer, participant, and spectator who helped make this year's event such a memorable success. Together, we **raised over \$43,000 in net proceeds** to support Clear Lake conservation projects that protect the lakes, woodlands, wetlands, and natural spaces we all cherish!*

Here's a snapshot of the day:

87 runners completed the scenic 10K route around Clear Lake.

77 runners enjoyed the 5K course along the east shore towards Memorial Woods.

95 participants crossed the finish line in the 1-Mile Fun Run through Old Town Hall Park.

67 volunteers generously shared their time and talents to make this event possible.

More than **35** driveways came alive with cheers, signs, and encouragement for every runner.

From the first starting call to the final finish-line celebration, the day was filled with smiles, laughter, and community pride. Events like Run Day, Fun Day remind us that conservation is about more than protecting land – it's about bringing people together to celebrate and care for this special place.

For 35 years, your generosity and support have helped protect and preserve the natural beauty of Clear Lake Township for today's residents and for future generations. Thank you for being part of this wonderful tradition.

**Due to the timing of this publication, all sponsorships and donations will be recognized in the gift list published in our Fall Clear Thinking newsletter.*



Congratulations to the winners!

10K Men's 1st Place: Eric Wymer

10K Woman's 1st Place: Andrea Smith

5K Men's 1st Place: Issac Wappes

5K Women's 1st Place: Lucy Charland

See all results and photos at
runsignup.com/cltlc

UPCOMING EVENTS



SUMMER FITNESS HIKE

Saturday, August 8 - 9 a.m.
@ Clear Lake Nature Preserve

RAPTORS OF INDIANA WITH SOARIN' HAWK

Saturday, September 5 - 9 a.m.
@ Memorial Woods



STARS IN THE PRAIRIE

Friday, September 11 - 9 p.m.
@ Johnston Barn and Silo

LAND

BY POPULAR DEMAND, OAKTOBER IS BACK!

Oaktober is our community tree-planting program and the perfect way to celebrate the best season for planting native trees. It makes it easy to add wildlife-friendly trees and shrubs to your property that create habitat for birds and pollinators, improve water quality, and strengthen Clear Lake Township's natural landscape. Participation is simple: **choose a tree, mark the location, and our volunteers will do the planting in October.**

This year, you can choose from **Bur Oak**, **Ninebark**, or **Common Chokecherry**. With your help, our goal is to plant 50 native trees and shrubs throughout Clear Lake Township in 2026. To reserve your tree, simply scan this QR code and complete the request form. If you have questions, please contact Joe Bernard at steward@clearlakeconservancy.org.

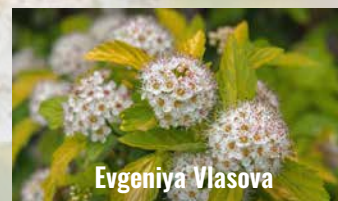


SCAN TO RESERVE YOUR TREE!

- **Bur Oak** – A long-lasting tree that supports hundreds of pollinator species and provides food and shelter for birds and mammals. Mature trees **can exceed 100 feet** with a broad canopy, making them an excellent long-term shade tree.
- **Ninebark** – A hardy native shrub that is fast-growing, drought-tolerant, and resistant to insects and disease. It reaches up to **10 feet tall** and produces spring flowers, vibrant fall color, and valuable pollinator habitat.
- **Common Chokecherry** – An adaptable native tree growing **20–30 feet tall** that thrives in many conditions. Fragrant spring flowers produce fruit that feeds birds and wildlife.



Evgeniya Vlasova



Evgeniya Vlasova



Autumn Wood

Photos by The Spruce

TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS AT BRENNAN WOODS

Our public trails offer wonderful opportunities to slow down, reconnect with nature, and experience the beauty of Clear Lake Township. Especially after a long day on the water, a quiet hike in nature is a great way to unwind.

One of our most popular destinations is **Brennan Woods** in the **Clear Lake Nature Preserve**, where visitors enjoy a challenging hike through mature oak forests with scenic hilltop views overlooking wooded valleys.



Before



After

Last year, Conservancy volunteers identified a steep section of trail that had experienced significant erosion. Working together with members of our Lands Committee and our partners at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, we developed a lasting solution. The redesigned section of trail now provides a steady, more sustainable climb while reducing future erosion and improving the hiking experience for visitors.

Trail improvements like these are made possible through the generosity of our volunteers and supporters. Thank you for helping us care for these special places. We hope you'll take time to visit your favorite trail this summer!

WATER

LESS TIME, MORE DATA!

NEW TOOLS STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY WATER QUALITY MONITORING

For more than **35 years**, dedicated community volunteers have helped monitor the health of Clear Lake and its inflowing ditches. Their commitment has created one of the region's longest-running volunteer monitoring programs, providing valuable information that helps us better understand and protect our watershed.

Each summer, our volunteers collect data through the **Hoosier Riverwatch** and **Indiana Clean Lakes** programs, contributing information that is shared with environmental scientists and natural resources professionals across the state.

This year, thanks to a grant from the **Land Trust Alliance**, our monitoring program has taken another step forward with the addition of a new **dissolved oxygen meter**. Dissolved oxygen is essential for healthy fish, aquatic plants, and water clarity. Measuring oxygen levels helps us better understand the overall health of Clear Lake.

The grant also provides funding for **professional laboratory analysis** of water samples. Previously, volunteers utilized testing strips, color-changing vials, thermometers, and clarity tubes to collect many of these measurements. This year, water samples are being analyzed by a certified environmental laboratory, providing accurate results while cutting volunteer testing time nearly in half! **That means less time collecting data in the field and more high-quality information to guide conservation efforts.**

VOLUNTEER MONITORING DATA INCLUDES:

- Phosphorus
- Nitrogen
- Dissolved oxygen
- Water clarity
- Water temperature
- pH
- Chlorophyll
- E. Coli

Are you interested in helping monitor the lakes and streams you love? Join our water quality monitoring team by emailing info@clearlakeconservancy.org. Volunteers typically monitor once per month on a weekday morning. It's a rewarding way to contribute to the long-term health of Clear Lake while working alongside others who share a lake passion and want to protect the quality of the lake for future generations.

EDUCATION

NEW BLUE PAPER EXPLORES THE POWER OF ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Have you ever wondered how a damaged natural area comes back to life? For thousands of years, the forests, wetlands and lakes around Northeast Indiana have provided clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, and countless other benefits. Over time, however, development, habitat loss, and invasive species have altered many of these ecosystems.

Invasive plants crowd out native wildflowers, grasses and trees, reducing biodiversity and disrupting the natural relationships that keep our ecosystems healthy and resilient. Fortunately, these natural spaces can be restored – with a little help.

Ecological restoration is the process of helping natural areas regain their health and function. At the Conservancy, this work includes prescribed burns, native seed planting, invasive species management, habitat improvement and long-term ecological monitoring at preserves like **Clear Lake Nature Preserve** and **Waterfield Preserve**.

These restoration efforts improve wildlife habitat, support pollinators, protect water quality, and help ensure that future generations can experience the beauty and diversity of the landscapes that make Clear Lake Township so special.

Curious about how these restoration techniques work and why they are so important? Visit our website to read our newest **Blue Paper, Ecological Restoration**, and discover the science and stewardship behind restoring our local ecosystems.



Prairie Restoration at Clear Lake Nature Preserve



Thanks to Ellie Shultz, Ecology Ellie, for hosting a BioBlitz with iNaturalist at Spangler Grove on June 30th!

DISCOVER THE NATURAL WORLD AROUND YOU WITH iNATURALIST

Have you ever noticed an unfamiliar bird, wildflower, or butterfly while exploring a Conservancy preserve or your own backyard? With **iNaturalist**, identifying the plants and animals around you is easier than ever.

Simply create a free account at **iNaturalist.org** or download the app to your smartphone. When you discover something interesting, take a clear photo and upload it. The iNaturalist app will suggest possible identifications and a worldwide community of naturalists and scientists can help confirm what you've found.

Every observation you submit becomes part of a global scientific database used by researchers, conservation organizations and land managers to better understand biodiversity and track changes in wildlife populations. You can even share your observations with the Conservancy by using the public map feature! iNaturalist offers a fun and meaningful way to explore nature while contributing to real conservation science.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORT!



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The Kramer Family at
Willow Hollow

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GRANT SUPPORT

Steuben County Soil and Water
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Thrivent Choice on behalf of Don
and Ellen Luepke

IN-KIND

Essentially Clean & More

List reflects contributions received between April 1, 2026 and June 30, 2026. *All Run Day, Fun Day contributions will be included in our Fall Newsletter. Contact us if you see a mistake.



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SIGHTS OF THE SEASON



Photo by Terry Brown



Photo by Elizabeth Siferd



Photo by Heather Wilson

See the lake through the lens of our talented residents.
To submit a photo for "Sights of the Season", please
email our office at info@clearlakeconservancy.org.