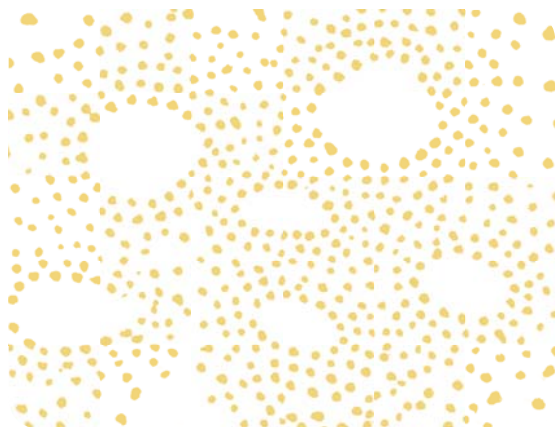


THE **ETHIC** OF THE
INDIANA DUNES REGION



A CALL TO ETHICAL ACTION

The Ethic of the Indiana Dunes Region is a call to ethical action. This call is to and from the individuals, communities, industries and governments that impact and depend upon the Indiana Dunes Region for their livelihoods and functions. Through a recognition of our history, an acknowledgement of our present realities, and a compassion for our future, we come together to suggest a framework for a just, sustainable and flourishing quality of life. This document identifies (1) why we need ethical action; (2) what we value; and (3) what we aim to achieve. It is a living document, to be modified with our changing times and communities, and to be considered and balanced in decision-making.

The Ethic of the Indiana Dunes Region, and the coming program that will work to implement it, originated in community discussions of local citizens and international experts in September of 2010 as part of the Biosphere Ethics Initiative, an undertaking of the Center for Humans and Nature and the Commission on Environmental Law of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The Initiative seeks to engage regional communities worldwide to reflect ethically on their relations with one another and with the natural world around them and to take actions for a sustainable future for all.

Ethics asks us, as a society, what is right and wrong in these relationships, what kind of life do we want to live, and when do our responsibilities require action? This Ethic seeks to address those questions within the Indiana Dunes Region, and to offer guidance for an ethical way forward.

The Indiana Dunes Region consists of the people and places along the shores and tributaries of Lake Michigan, as well as the individuals and businesses from around the world that depend, have depended, or will depend, upon its people and natural resources. It encompasses the entire community of life, its species and its systems, within and beyond political boundaries.

We depend upon one another and our environment for the very foundations of our life. The forests and ferns of Ambler Flatwoods Nature Preserve cleanse our air and our souls. In a world where people are dying from thirst, the freshwaters of Lake Michigan give life to our bodies and our businesses. The sand dunes, plant life and wildlife of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and the Indiana Dunes State Park provide a source of spiritual renewal, beauty, inspiration and a place for family retreat. And these sacred areas, and more, have inspired the creativity of artists such as Carl Sandburg, Edwin Way Teale, Frank Dudley, Hazel Hannell, and Carol Cook.

However, too many residents, visitors and businesses are not aware of the natural treasure at their doorsteps, or the grave harm that is taking place. Power imbalances and self-interest are undermining the natural, social, cultural and economic foundations on which we rely. As individuals and as members of this regional community, we have a responsibility to prevent the continued loss and degradation of this environment and to nurture a rediscovery of our living relationship with it. **WE NEED ETHICS TO INFORM OUR ACTIONS.**

OUR VALUES

Developing an ethic for the region requires identifying what we value and wish to maintain. By clearly stating these qualities and characteristics we can determine our aims for regional environmental health and quality of life for all.

- 1 We value the strength in our diversity in humans and nature: we have farms and cities, Democrats and Republicans, coastlines and prairies, Karner Blue butterflies and Marram grass, truck drivers and teachers, and people across races, religions and ethnicities.**

The Indiana Dunes Region was originally thinly populated by American Indians of the Potawatami tribe, known as the “Keepers of the Fire,” and the first European Americans were fur trappers and traders. Small farmers followed, but it was not until industrial developments in the late 19th century that substantial numbers of people came to inhabit the area. Steel-making dominated the Lake Michigan shoreline of the Indiana Dunes Region well through the 20th century, and this industry continues to play a vital economic role. This area is also incredibly diverse ethnically and culturally, with a melting pot of white, black, Hispanic and Asian populations.

The Indiana Dunes Region is a very diverse landscape, with remnant natural areas adjacent to major industrial and urban residential developments. About 1,130 plant species are found in these settings, similar to the floral richness of the Grand Canyon and the Great Smoky Mountains.

- 2 We value our unique geography and geology, and the importance and rarity of our natural systems that provide industrial, residential, recreational, and agricultural uses.**

The topography of the landscape reflects four stages of glaciation during the formation of Lake Michigan at the end of the Pleistocene era, creating a diverse set of habitats from coastal dunes to a variety of wetlands, tall grass prairies, oak savannas, pine forests, and eastern deciduous forests.

The health and resilience of both the built and natural environments is a challenge for a future with a large anticipated population growth. Currently, urban areas such as Gary, Hammond and Michigan City need resuscitation as places to live, and natural areas need more connectivity to adapt to climate change and other environmental changes.

3 We value our place in history and the deep care, strength, and personal sacrifices of those leaders who have come before us, notably:

- + Dr. Henry Palmer's Underground Railroad site in Michigan City in the mid-1800s
- + the Campbell Friendship Settlement House in Gary at the turn of the 20th century
- + Henry Chandler Cowles' field trips to the Dunes in the early 1900s
- + the advocacy for a Dunes National Park by Chicago industrialist and conservationist, Stephen T. Mather, in 1916
- + the persistent efforts to create the Indiana Dunes State Park in 1925 from citizens such as Bess Sheehan of the Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs
- + the creation of the Save the Dunes Council by Dorothy Buell in 1952
- + the political courage of Senator Paul Douglas to create the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in 1966; and
- + the protest of a nuclear power plant by environmental conservationists alongside Local 6787 United Steelworkers in the 1970s, and again in 2011

4 We value community-minded activists, advocates and political leaders who encourage cooperation across party lines, who listen to all voices, and who are willing to look across jurisdictions for solutions toward a more just and sustainable quality of life for the entire Indiana Dunes Region.

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) is a very important recent development of the consciousness and knowledge needed for achieving sustainable ways of life for residents and visitors. There is great value for all in NIRPC's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, as well as the Marquette Plan, sponsored by Congressman Pete Visclosky, which would restore public access to much of the lakeshore and control adjacent development. Notable elsewhere are the plans for restoration of the Indiana Grand Kankakee Marsh, a 30,000 acre marsh spanning across three counties. This undertaking is important for water resource management as well as the flourishing of wetland wildlife. Planning for revitalization of urban centers is also now underway since large areas of cities have become blighted and unoccupied as their populations became less able to support local merchants and markets, due in part to the declines in employment by large industrial corporations.

OUR AIMS

As we work toward preserving the Indiana Dunes Region and caring for its entire community of life, we will learn from the wisdom of the past, provide for the present, and recognize our responsibilities to the future. Our primary purposes are as follows:

1 THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE COMMUNITY

- + We will promote the interests of the community over self-interest
- + We recognize the legitimacy of every voice
- + In the spirit of the Jens Jensen council ring, we will come together as equals, eye-to-eye and face-to-face, and speak honestly about what we have done and what we should be doing for one another and our environment
- + We will encourage cultural diversity

2 THE ENVIRONMENT

- + We will protect biodiversity, open space, and public access
- + We will promote sustainable agriculture and local foods
- + We will support governments and organizations that train employees and volunteers in native plant, wild life and habitat restoration
- + We will support the creation of a regional climate change adaptation plan, that incorporates social justice and biodiversity conservation

3 INDUSTRY

- + We will promote regional planning for sustainable development, un-development and re-development
- + We will expect corporate social responsibility of industries in the Region
- + We will promote sustainable job creation

4 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- + We will promote democratic engagement and dialogue, where nature has a voice at the decision-making table
- + We will work to build trust between generations, disciplines, businesses and partnerships
- + We will work to protect the vulnerable people and places, the often discarded members of society, such as prisoners seeking rehabilitation and re-entering the community, the unemployed and the working poor, as well as the fragile, fragmented natural landscapes that need connecting habitat, greenways, and blueways
- + We will not tolerate political corruption

5 EDUCATION AND THE ARTS

- + Through environmental conservation, we will nurture education and the arts
- + We will promote creativity, imagination, freedom and play, for children and adults
- + We will promote education initiatives that support ethical relationships with the environment and one another

Finally, we will celebrate the successes in achieving these aims.

AN INVITATION

The Ethic of the Indiana Dunes Region is a call to ethical thinking and acting. In this regional community, with diverse social, political and economic interests, we share in common one reality: the natural environment, the very foundation of our life.

Let us together continue to evolve this Ethic with growing partnerships through changing times. Let us together create practical action steps to honor the values and implement the aims of this Ethic. And let us together work for a more just, sustainable and flourishing quality of life, for all life.



CENTER FOR HUMANS AND NATURE

Expanding Our Natural and Civic Imagination

For further information or to participate in the Biosphere Ethics Initiative or the Ethic of the Indiana Dunes Region, please visit

WWW.HUMANSANDNATURE.ORG

or call 312-629-5060