

Nature Reserve Receives Grant to Create New Alliance

EVANSVILLE, Ind. - The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (INDR) recently offered a \$249,000 grant to assist in the creation of the Evansville Forest Alliance.

This alliance has been 2 years in the making, and includes local organizations such as the Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve (WW), Community One, the City of Evansville Arborist, and the City of Evansville Climate Action Director. These collaborative groups seek to balance the city's urban environment with calculated tree planting, and will place a special emphasis on helping low-income communities. Through these efforts, the alliance will foster an educational and engaging community, and offer possible employment to the Evansville community.

Zach Garcia, Executive Director of Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve, expressed his excitement that the Evansville Forest Alliance is coming to fruition. He shared that, "planting native trees, educating citizens on maintenance and care for trees, and providing outreach events on the importance of a healthy tree canopy are all wins for our city, its residents, and our urban ecosystem."

Initial goals of the alliance include planting trees in Tepe Park, and conducting a city-wide canopy assessment. City Arborist Shawn Dickerson explained that the canopy assessment will identify "places to plant trees where they are needed in the underserved areas of the city." This process will involve Indiana University's Cohort Program and residents of the prospective tree planting areas. Ideally, a larger canopy in low-income areas will relieve problems like excessive heat and high energy costs. (Lauren Norvell, City of Evansville Climate Action Director)

The formation of the Evansville Forest Alliance signifies the strength of the Evansville community, and offers hope for environmental improvements. Zach Garcia hopes that the alliance "will be a continuing effort for decades to come."

Those who would like to become involved with the Evansville Forest Alliance or hear more information are welcome to reach out to Zach Garcia by phone at 812-479-0771, or by email at zach@wesslemanwoods.org.