

Grant Story – Duff Lake Fen

Friends of LaGrange County Parks, in partnership with Blue Heron Ministries and LaGrange County Park Department, have undertaken an ambitious project to restore 130 acres at Pine Knob County Park. This group was recently awarded \$5,000 in funding from the Ralph E. Taylor Conservation Fund held at Steuben County Community Foundation for conservation of the wetlands and prairie land known as Duff Lake Fen. The funding was used for the purchase of two orchid species that are native to northeast Indiana but have disappeared in this fen over time as a result of grazing cattle. This project is part of a larger effort to diversify the plants in areas of northeast Indiana. The goal is that Steuben county residents can enjoy the beauty of their community while rare or endangered plants and animals, such as the federally endangered Michells Satyr butterfly, have the opportunity to thrive.

The Ralph E. Taylor Conservation Fund was created to support the conservation of the natural environment in northeast Indiana. This fund provides support for educational opportunities about conservation practices as well as the reintroduction of plants and animals to their natural habitats. It was created by Cheryl Taylor in honor of the service of her husband, Ralph Taylor, in his 30 years with the DNR. Cheryl Taylor believes this project will provide “an additional reason for people to enjoy the wonders of nature, reminding us how truly connected we are to the earth.” According to Michael Metz, Director of LaGrange County Department of Parks and Recreation, this project is part of a larger effort that also includes the construction of walking trails throughout Pine Knob Park. Blue Heron Ministries and the Friends of LaGrange County Parks have received funding for this project from multiple organizations, including the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Save Our Great Lakes. Nate Simons, Executive Director of Blue Heron Ministries, has said there is still work to be done in terms of controlling invasive species and prescribing fires. “The goal is to perpetuate the restored prairie fen and surrounding dry prairie and oak savanna ecosystem with fire as it once was prior to European settlement.”



Pictured: Cheryl Taylor, Michael Metz, Nate Simons, Gary Chapman, Gloria Sherwood, Elma Chapman



Pictured: (Top photo) Cheryl Taylor, Nate Simons, Michael Metz, (Bottom Photo) Reintroduced Orchid plant

