

The ACRES Land Trust

ACRES Land Trust, one of the oldest land trusts in the U.S., is dedicated to preserving land in northeast Indiana, northwest Ohio, and southern Michigan. The trust began in 1960, and it now has 85 natural preserves across 15 Indiana counties. The goal of the land trust is to protect natural habitats in Indiana in order to provide environmental education, recreation, scientific study, and enjoyment for the public.

The most recent strategic plan for the ACRES Land Trust involves increasing the total amount of preserved land to 7,500 acres by the end of 2017. ACRES recently acquired property in Allen County and Blue Cast Springs, which brought the total area of preserved land in the trust to 5,046 acres.



East of Peru, on the North side of the Mississinewa River, stands Seven Pillars, a sacred site of the Miami Native Americans.

In 2005, ACRES Land Trust established a fund with the Miami County Community Foundation in order to help provide for its ongoing financial needs, specifically in ACRES' Nature Preserves in Fulton, Starke, and Miami Counties. Earnings from the ACRES Land Trust Agency Endowment help the ACRES Land Trust personnel maintain parking areas, trail systems, boundary markers, and comment boxes.

One ACRES Nature Preserve in Miami County is Seven Pillars, a geological wonder comprised of seven limestone cliffs that are each about 25 feet tall and have been carved over time by the Mississinewa River. The property was acquired by the Iddings family in 1982 and is supported by the ACRES Land Trust with the Miami County Community Foundation.

"Seven Pillars really stands out because of its geological significance as well as its cultural and historical significance," said ACRES Land Trust Executive Director, Jason Kissel.

The site was at one time called the Miami Wappa-Pin Sah Reserve. It has cultural and spiritual significance to the Miami area. For generations, it held an important position in Miami oral tradition, customs, and history. The site is still used by the Miami tribe, as they continue to teach their children about their culture and history as their ancestors did "in the shadows of Seven Pillars."

"The Miami Indians established an early trading post there where they hosted meetings and dances," wrote Marilyn Coppernoll in her book, *Miami County, Indiana: a Pictorial History*. "Later the Pillars served as a favorite picnic spot for church and other groups until about the 1950s."

ACRES is hoping to add another managed property in Miami County with the acquisition of Flowers Creek Nature Preserve. This 144 acre property is located on the eastern edge of Chili and is very important due to its unique vegetation and water filtering capability. The preserve contains the meandering Flowers Creek that slows, stores, and filters water before it enters the Eel River on the south end of the property.