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Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission Adds Indiana University Southeast as Partner at Blackacre State Nature Preserve

New partner will operate ecology field station at preserve

FRANKFORT, Ky. – (Jan. 12, 2011) – The Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission today announced that Indiana University Southeast (IUS) has been added as a fourth partner to expand the commission's environmental education program at Blackacre State Nature Preserve in Jefferson County.

For the past two years, professors and students from IUS have been conducting research at Blackacre. Their efforts have been focused on providing information on water quality, an updated plant list, examining effects of prescribed fire on insect populations, tracking the preserve's box turtle population, and surveying the distribution of coyotes and feral cats. Results of their labors include a recently submitted manuscript, a research conference presentation and poster.

"With the attention Floyd's Fork is garnering and Blackacre located nearby, there is a great opportunity with IUS for learning about this watershed – water quality and quantity, the impacts of rural/urban interfaces, biological trends and invasive species impacts," said Joyce Bender, Nature Preserves and Natural Areas branch manager. "Many neighbors are working to offset the impacts of development along Blankenbaker and the Gene Snyder. Data generated by IUS will support efforts of our neighbors to retain a natural aspect to the preserve's surroundings. Working with college students,

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) students will benefit and see a possible next step in their education and career path. Blackacre's visitors, both children and adults, will take away the message that we are all part of an ecosystem and what we do affects everything else."

JCPS system has used the preserve as an environmental education facility for 30 years. The Blackacre Conservancy has been responsible for the maintenance of buildings that date to the 1790s and has facilitated public access. The commission's responsibility is to provide for the perpetual protection of a statewide nature preserves system consisting of 60 preserves, including Blackacre.

The landscape surrounding Blackacre has changed dramatically since the original partnership began in 1985. Located in what was once a rural area outside of Jeffersontown, the preserve is now surrounded by subdivisions and commercial development. Impacts to the preserve that reflect changes in land use patterns such as increased runoff and feral animal populations have been observed.

One of the commission's primary goals at Blackacre is to increase the public's understanding of the connectivity of ecosystems to the urban community surrounding the nature preserve. The partnership with IUS is an opportunity to educate the public. The commission's intent is to develop awareness so that citizens will recognize the value of natural systems as integral to their quality of life and modify their activities to enhance them.

Learn more about the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission through its website: <http://naturepreserves.ky.gov>

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