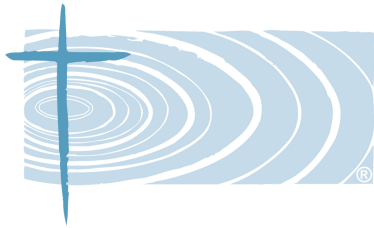


Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ



Partners in the work of the Spirit



2022 ECOLOGICAL IMPACT REPORT

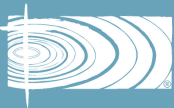
The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (the PHJCs) engage in sustainable land stewardship as a comprehensive approach to managing our properties and natural resources that prioritizes environmental conservation, social well-being, and economic viability. Through our work, we aim to manage the land and natural resources responsibly and ethically in our care to ensure long-term benefits to humans and the natural world around us.

The continued annual loss of wetland habitat is a particular area of concern for the PHJCs and one we are directly working to reverse. Wetlands are one of the most important and biodiverse habitats and are critical to the availability of clean water and act as natural flood control regions. They also act as important carbon sinks at a time when carbon in the atmosphere is on a critical rise. Since the early 1700s, The United States has lost over 40% of its wetlands across the entire range of the lower 48 states. In Indiana, we have lost over 85% of our historic wetlands, primarily to agriculture and real estate development. Of our original wetland habitat state-wide, only approximately 800,000 acres remain. While that may sound like a lot, consider that the State of Indiana alone had around 5.6 million acres of wetlands in the 1780s.

In 2021, The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ identified 23 acres of what is currently farmland in a conventional soybean and corn rotation and designated it to be restored as a wetland habitat due to its low-lying elevation and proximity to an existing wetland and Lake Galbraith. In July of 2022 we were awarded a Lakes and Rivers Enhancement (LARE) grant from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to cover a significant portion of the cost to do this work. Once restored we anticipate that this wetland will not only become a vital part of the water system for the Flat Lake Watershed but will also contribute to enhancing wildlife habitat and serve as a center of research and learning for local education institutions including our very own Marian University Ancilla College.



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Wetland habitat isn't the only area where the PHJCs are focused on restoring our lands to their native state. Creating rich biodiversity is important in supporting wildlife, wild things, and sequestering carbon. Grasslands and native prairies play a critical role in this important work. The PHJC properties contain over 10 acres of mixed native prairie and grasslands which support various types of plant and animal life and is an important supportive infrastructure for native pollinator species. It is estimated that for each acre of native prairie, one ton of carbon is sequestered out of the atmosphere annually. This is in contrast to standard turf lawn that for each acre only sequesters .25 ton of carbon per acre. Further, turf grass generally requires regular maintenance which means burning fossil fuels for mowing and adding synthetic fertilizers. Native prairies are perennial and self-supporting and generally only require a single maintenance mowing once per year!

The PHJCs have extended this ever-important land ethic to our farm as well. Currently our farm is in a conventional soybean-corn rotation but we are taking great strides each year to convert our system to a Regenerative Agriculture system that increases soil health, reduces erosion, and reduces our use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. For example, at the end of the 2022 growing season we eliminated all post-season tillage from our farming practices. As we moved into the 2023 growing season we further reduced our tillage passes and will be bringing a new system of planting no-till soybeans after cover crop starting in the 2024 growing season. This is in addition to the half-acre of new pollinator habitats we planted on our designated organic farm fields.



The adoption and integration of sustainable land stewardship practices has far-reaching positive impacts on the environment, society, and economy. By prioritizing biodiversity, conservation, soil health, and climate change mitigation, we can create a more sustainable and resilient experience for future generations. Embracing sustainable land stewardship is a critical investment in the long-term well-being of our planet and its inhabitants.

Through your generous support - and following the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ core values of Community, Simplicity and Dignity, Openness to the Spirit, and Dignity and Respect for all - The PHJCs is making critical change in our approach to our shared home.

