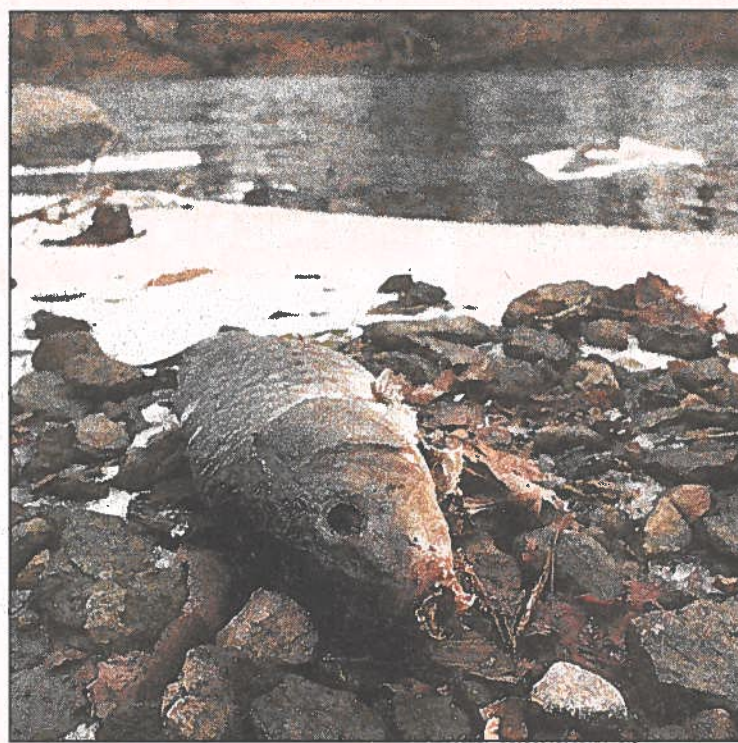


## 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FISH KILL



## WHITE RIVER IN MADISON COUNTY



Thanks to efforts of local activists and millions of dollars in restoration funds, the White River, as seen Thursday at left, has fully recovered from the fish kill of 1999.

# 10 years of recovery

In December 1999, one of the worst environmental disasters in Indiana history originated in Anderson. An estimated 10,000 gallons of the chemical HMP 2000 was illegally discharged by Guide Corp. and passed into the White River. The contamination resulted in the death of 4.6 million fish and other aquatic life along 57 miles of the river. After 10 years and \$6 million worth of restoration projects, the river has been revived.

### INSIDE

A disaster unfolds: A time line of the White River fish kill from December 1999 to January 2000 **Page A4**

The White River is generally safe for recreation and its fish can be eaten in limited quantities **Page A4**

Worst not last: The most serious illegal discharges into the river over the past 10 years **Page A4**

Breakdown of the \$6 million spent to restore the White River after the fish kill **Page A5**

White River's importance extends to recreation, aesthetics and economics **Page A6**

# River 'in better

## 1999 catastrophe spawned environmental activism

By Justin Schneider  
The Herald Bulletin

ANDERSON — Scour the banks of the White River.

Amid the muddy banks, rich clumps of algae and swirling smallmouth bass, faint traces of the environmental catastrophe known as the White River fish kill can still be found.

"It left a trademark ring around every rock and every piece of concrete," said John Bundy, founder of White River Rescue 2000. "It left a snow-white ring."

In 1999, a chemical discharge originating in Anderson decimated aquatic life for 57 miles along the waterway. It killed 4.6 million fish, leaving the public concerned about natural resources and suspicious of industry.

But for all its destructive power, the incident also inspired unity. It rallied government agencies, conservationists and the public behind a common cause. That sense of cooperation led to a landmark settlement and restoration effort and, 10 years later, the White River has exceeded expectations for its recovery.

"In the last decade, it's created an incredible amount of public awareness," said Crist Blassaras, former president of the White River Watchers. "More people are utilizing the White River today as a recreational resource. It's in better shape today than it was 10 years ago."

### A complete kill

The first signs of trouble appeared on Dec. 13, 1999, when the Anderson Wastewater Treatment Plant began churning out a wall of foam. Three days later, a conservation officer in Hamilton County observed about 20 dead fish in the White River.

John Bundy also witnessed strange activity near his Perkinsville home.

"The fish were all up on top of the surface, popping the surface, forcing their way up Pipe Creek," Bundy said. "We had a lot of log jams in there, and they couldn't get up there very well to get into the fresh water. They were already dead. They had already been exposed to the neurotoxin."

By Dec. 20, environmental regulators were inspecting the city sewage plant and discovered that Anderson had failed to report the foam. An estimated 100,000 dead fish were reported by Dec. 27. The following day, Indiana Department of Environmental Management Commissioner Lori Kaplan said that her agency

had traced the contamination back to Guide Corp.'s automotive lighting factory in Anderson.

"What we learned in those early, early investigations was that it appeared to have been a complete kill," said Bill James, chief of fisheries for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. "All fish in the river, from Anderson to a point about 30 miles downstream. Another 20 miles were not a complete kill, but a partial kill."

In all, 4.6 million fish weighing a total of 187 tons had been destroyed.

### Delay and opportunity

Kevin Hardie, executive director of Friends of the White River, said it took widespread media coverage for the disaster to gain traction politically.

"It was a perfect storm, the combination of events," Hardie said. "A lot of agencies were limited in terms of manpower with the traditional holiday slow period. We had low water levels, and extremely low temperatures moved in."

The response reached a critical mass on Jan. 11, 2000, when Gov. Frank O'Bannon asked the FBI, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice to investigate violations of the Clean Water Act. On Jan. 12, state inspectors marched into Guide with a court-issued warrant to gather evidence.

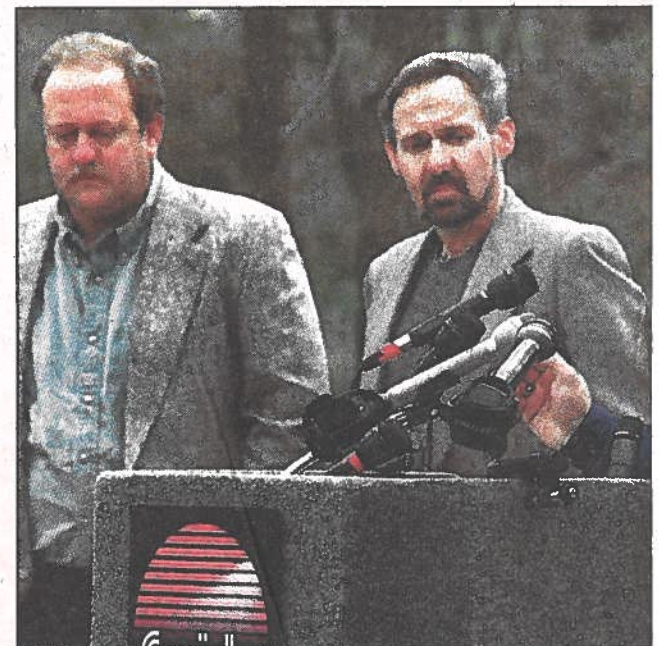
A protracted legal battle was about to begin, and Indiana hired a former Justice Department attorney, Linda L. Pence, to investigate at a cost of \$225.25 an hour. John Bundy knew the river couldn't afford another delay.



John Bundy of White River laments the loss of people — your still need to be forgotten. West

"We knew there would be a settlement, but it couldn't take more than a year," Bundy said. "We had to raise the money privately."

Bundy set up White River Rescue 2000, with his wife, Valerie; Jim and Lorie Schwartz, owners of a bait and tackle shop, in Noblesville, and Don Watson. The group was in place to receive a \$50,000 donation from Guide and matching funds from Wal-Mart. Bundy, also the owner of decoy company Bundy Ducks, rolled out a fundraising model at \$180 apiece, bringing the total money raised to \$167,000.



Steve Murray (right), Guide Corp. executive vice president, at a news conference in March 2000 along White River in Indiana. Guide Corp. donated \$50,000 to White River Rescue 2000 to help fund the cleanup. John Bundy, left, and John Bundy, founders of the nonprofit

## Consumption guidelines: White River fish

Many anglers prefer to catch and release, but White River fish are safe to eat in limited quantities for some populations.



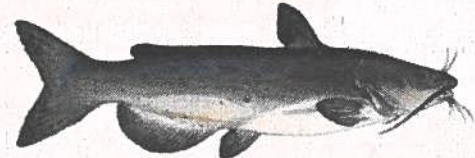
### Bluegill

Size	At-risk population	General population
Any	1 meal per week	Unlimited



### Carp

Size	At-risk population	General population
Up to 19"	Do not eat	1 meal/2 months
19" or more	Do not eat	Do not eat



### Channel catfish

Size	At-risk population	General population
10-17"	Do not eat	1 meal/month
17" or more	Do not eat	1 meal/2 months



### Largemouth bass

Size	At-risk population	General population
12-17"	1 meal per month	1 meal/week
17" or more	Do not eat	1 meal/month



### Smallmouth bass

Size	At-risk population	General population
12" or more	Do not eat	1 meal/month

\*At-risk population includes women of child-bearing years, nursing mothers and children under age 15.

Source: Friends of the White River



John P. Cleary, file / The Herald Bulletin

State DNR Assistant Fishery Biologist Dave Kittaka writes down data from the fish samples that were taken along about a half mile of White River in January 2000 from the Raible Avenue bridge to the discharge area from the Anderson Wastewater Treatment Plant.

### Recent discharges

According to Amber Finkelstein, public information officer for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the White River has experienced three major, unpermitted discharges from two sources since the Guide Corp. fish kill of 1999.

#### Offender: Indianapolis Power & Light Co.

Source: Eagle Valley Generating Station in Martinsville, Morgan County  
Incident: On Feb. 14, 2007, 30 million gallons of ash sluice water were released into the West Fork of the White River. Another 30 million gallons of ash sluice water were released on Jan. 30, 2008.

Resolution: In April 2008, Indianapolis Power & Light agreed to pay a civil penalty of \$23,800.

#### Offender: Hoosier Energy

Source: Ratts Generating Station in Petersburg, Pike County  
Incident: In September 2006, a discharge of an air emission baghouse impoundment to the main stem of the White River.

Resolution: In September 2007, Hoosier Energy entered into an agreed order and paid a civil penalty of \$10,200.

Source: Indiana Department of Environmental Management



# er shape' than 10 years ago



John P. Cleary / The Herald Bulletin

Restock 2000 talks in his duck decoy workshop. "Yes, the fish kill happened," Bundy said. "The real emphasis of the story is the hundreds and hundreds didn't matter — the richest and the poorest pitched in and actually came down and physically helped. It's a point in time which really doesn't matter to that to our environment."

"Nature abhors a vacuum," Bundy said. "Bill (James) and I said, 'We can make it happen if we restock.'" While IDEM, Justice and the EPA were investigating the river as a crime scene, others continued to focus on the environmental damage. The research led to some especially positive discovery: the contaminant had essentially washed away. "That became a very important point in the restoration plan for the river: it wasn't bioaccumulating," James said. "It flashed through and then we had

just lost the aquatic community out there. Mother nature was starting to rebuild."

### Life returns

By Jan. 2, James and his team confirmed that insects and macro invertebrates — organisms important to the food chain, such as crayfish, snails, mussels, flatworms and dragonflies — had burrowed into the soil for the winter, protecting them from the discharge. On April 28, the DNR began stocking the river with fish.

Behind closed doors, federal investigators were meeting with Steve Murray, executive vice president of human resources with Guide, IDEM spokesman Steve Sellers and Timothy B. Morrison, United States attorney for the South District of Indiana.

On June 18, 2001, Gov. O'Bannon staged a press conference at White River State Park in Indianapolis to announce that Guide had agreed to plead guilty to seven counts of criminal neglect and would pay \$13.97 million to settle state and federal lawsuits.

"We caught the big fish," O'Bannon told the crowd. Terms of the settlement set aside \$6 million for river restoration in the 57-mile kill zone. Three trustees were put in place to oversee the application of settlement funds: Scott Pruitt from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, John M. Davis of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and Elizabeth Admire from

the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

"We got the ideas to come to us," Pruitt said. "During our monthly meetings we reviewed hundreds of applications and ideas and funded many of them."

The state acquired 283 acres through "fee simple" land acquisitions and another 265 acres through conservation easements, which protect land from development. Another 650 acres underwent habitat restoration through the removal of invasive species and replanting of native species. River Bend Park, at the corner of Second and Sycamore streets just west of Madison Avenue in Anderson, is one example where land that was previously part of an agricultural field was planted with trees and prairie grass.

About \$750,000 was spent to improve public access points and create new ones. New boat launches were created in Hamilton County and Perkinsville, a canoe launch was added to River Bend Park in Anderson and the Broad Ripple Boat Ramp was improved.

Carl Wodrich, natural resource damages program director for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, facilitated meetings for public input on river restoration.

"We received \$6.25 million for restoration, and we've spent pretty much all of it," Wodrich said. "(The river) is probably in a lot better shape now than it was pre-fish kill."

### Legacy of a tragedy

Ten years on, those improvement projects are the legacy of the fish kill.

More than 1 million fish from 12 species have been stocked. Fisheries biologists seized the opportunity to re-introduce lost species, including the red horse, freshwater drum, buffalo fish and the sauger, a small cousin of the walleye. James says the fish population has made a full recovery.

"We asked in 2000 whether we could get back to where it was in a decade, and it's because that's how long it takes to grow a big fish," James said. "The guide services can catch 50 to 100 small-mouth bass in a day. We're finding 18-, 19-, 20-inch and even bigger small-mouth bass. The bass fishery is every bit as good or better."

Scott Pruitt said the fish kill is responsible for cleaner river banks. White River Rescue 2000 helped clean up the Moss Island Dump, removing bridge trestles and conducting ravine cleanups along 17 linear miles of the river bank.

"This disaster kind of turned people's interest to it," Pruitt said. "There was a huge outpouring to get the garbage out and clean the shorelines and take better care of it."

Maybe those snow-white rings are more blessing than curse. A reminder, not just of a disaster, but of a commu-

nity rallying to recovery.

"Yes, the fish kill happened," Bundy said. "The real emphasis of the story is the hundreds and hundreds of people — your status didn't matter — the richest and the poorest pitched in and actually came down and physically helped. It's a point in time which really doesn't need to be forgotten. We can't do that to our environment."

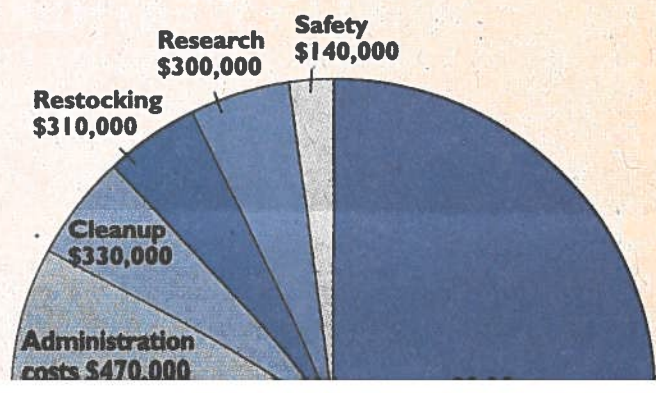
### River restocked

About \$310,000 of the more than \$6 million White River recovery project was spent on fish restocking. According to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, about 1.15 million fish from 13 species were used to fill the void left by the death of 4.26 million fish during the 1999 White River fish kill.

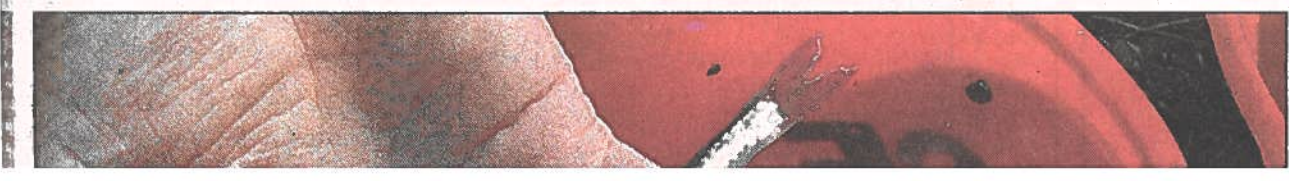
Species	Number of fish
Sauger	383,298
Channel catfish	328,429
Bluegill	204,743
Largemouth bass	123,988
Smallmouth bass	58,471
Rock bass	41,673
Crappie (black and white)	3,956
Flathead catfish	2,352
Freshwater drum	139
Shorthead redhorse	86
Bigmouth buffalo	34
Redear sunfish	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,147,192</b>

Source: Indiana Department of Natural Resources

### Disbursement of NRD funds for restoration



John P. Cleary, file / The Herald Bulletin





# Indiana's 'natural infrastructure'

White River's importance extends to recreation, aesthetics, economics

By Justin Schneider  
The Herald Bulletin

ANDERSON — The White River is wholly Indiana's.

The west fork originates in Randolph County, near the Ohio border, winds through Indianapolis and merges with the East Fork in Pike County. From there, the combined flow empties into the Wabash River on the Illinois border.

"It starts and ends in Indiana," said John Bundy of Perkinsville, who founded White River Rescue 2000 in response to the 1999 fish kill. Aquatic life along a 57-mile stretch of the river was destroyed after chemicals were discharged from Guide Corp. in Anderson.

The White River's importance extends from recreation — fishing and canoeing — to aesthetics and business. Countless streams, creeks and brooks feed the river along the two forks' combined 435-mile course, not to mention storm water from urban areas and runoff from agriculture.

"The upper White River drains more than half of Indiana," Carl Wodrich, natural resource damages program director for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, said of the 11,350 square miles drained by the river. "It's a pretty important watershed system and part of the larger Wabash watershed."

Historians trace the White River name back to

the Miami tribe, which settled near its banks and called the river "Wapehani," which means white sands. The river's importance has carried over from ancient Hoosiers to Indiana's modern people.

"Sixty percent of the drinking water in Indianapolis comes from the White River," said Kevin Hardie, executive director of Friends of the White River. "It's the reason the city was located here."

Hardie's group advised Madison County's White River Watchers when the group was in its early stages, and both strive to protect the waterway. He says he considers the White River part of Indiana's "natural infrastructure."

"A lot of cultural institutions are located along the White River," Hardie said. "The Indianapolis Museum of Art, White River State Park, the Indianapolis Arts Center, Butler University's Holcomb Gardens. Businesses have found ways to embrace it, rather than the way, in many instances, they turned their backs on the waterway."

Bill James, chief of fisheries for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, worries that incidents such as the 1999 fish kill have scared off people who might otherwise take advantage of the river. He said the public should embrace the river, albeit with a certain amount of caution.

"We still have combined sewer and septic overflows,

which means e-coli counts can still be high," James said. "So you shouldn't have full-body contact with the river, but it's not limiting the fishery resource."

As part of a federal consent decree resulting from the fish kill, Anderson agreed to complete \$161 million worth of measures over 20 years to reduce raw sewage overflows to the White River. The \$8.5 million first phase of the sewer overflow project is expected to be completed in 2011. Anderson operates two treatment plants, one off Gene Gustin Way and the other along Dewey Street, capable of treating up to 34 million gallons of wastewater per day.

James said 19- and 20-inch smallmouth bass have returned to the White River, attracting anglers. Canoe rentals and guided fishing tours provide a living for a select few.

The overwhelming message from state officials and natural resource stewards is that the river is meant to be used. Scott Pruitt, field supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services in Bloomington, served as one of three trustees who approved restoration projects after the 1999 fish kill.

"Please, do go to the river," Pruitt said. "There's no reason not to be in the river and float on it and enjoy it."

Contact Justin Schneider: 640-4809, [justin.schneider@heraldbulletin.com](mailto:justin.schneider@heraldbulletin.com)



Members of the White River through would be cleaned up



at

and dragonflies — had burrowed into the soil for the winter, protecting them from the discharge. On April 28, the DNR began stocking the river with fish.

Behind closed doors, federal investigators were meeting with Steve Murray, executive vice president of human resources with Guide, IDEM spokesman Steve Sellers and Timothy B. Morrison, United States attorney for the South District of Indiana.



Steve Davis of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, speaks at a press conference in Evansville where the commission announced the plan to stock the river. Steve Davis will look on.

and dragonflies — had burrowed into the soil for the winter, protecting them from the discharge. On April 28, the DNR began stocking the river with fish.

Behind closed doors, federal investigators were meeting with Steve Murray, executive vice president of human resources with Guide, IDEM spokesman Steve Sellers and Timothy B. Morrison, United States attorney for the South District of Indiana.

On June 18, 2001, Gov. O'Bannon staged a press conference at White River State Park in Indianapolis to announce that Guide had agreed to plead guilty to seven counts of criminal neglect and would pay \$13.97 million to settle state and federal lawsuits.

"We caught the big fish," O'Bannon told the crowd. Terms of the settlement set aside \$6 million for river restoration in the 57-mile kill zone. Three trustees were put in place to oversee the application of settlement funds: Scott Pruitt from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, John M. Davis of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and Elizabeth Admire from

ervation easements, which protect land from development. Another 650 acres underwent habitat restoration through the removal of invasive species and replanting of native species. River Bend Park, at the corner of Second and Sycamore streets just west of Madison Avenue in Anderson, is one example where land that was previously part of an agricultural field was planted with trees and prairie grass.

About \$750,000 was spent to improve public access points and create new ones. New boat launches were created in Hamilton County and Perkinsville, a canoe launch was added to River Bend Park in Anderson and the Broad Ripple Boat Ramp was improved.

Carl Wodrich, natural resource damages program director for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, facilitated meetings for public input on river restoration.

"We received \$6.25 million for restoration, and we've spent pretty much all of it," Wodrich said. "(The river) is probably in a lot better shape now than it was pre-fish kill."

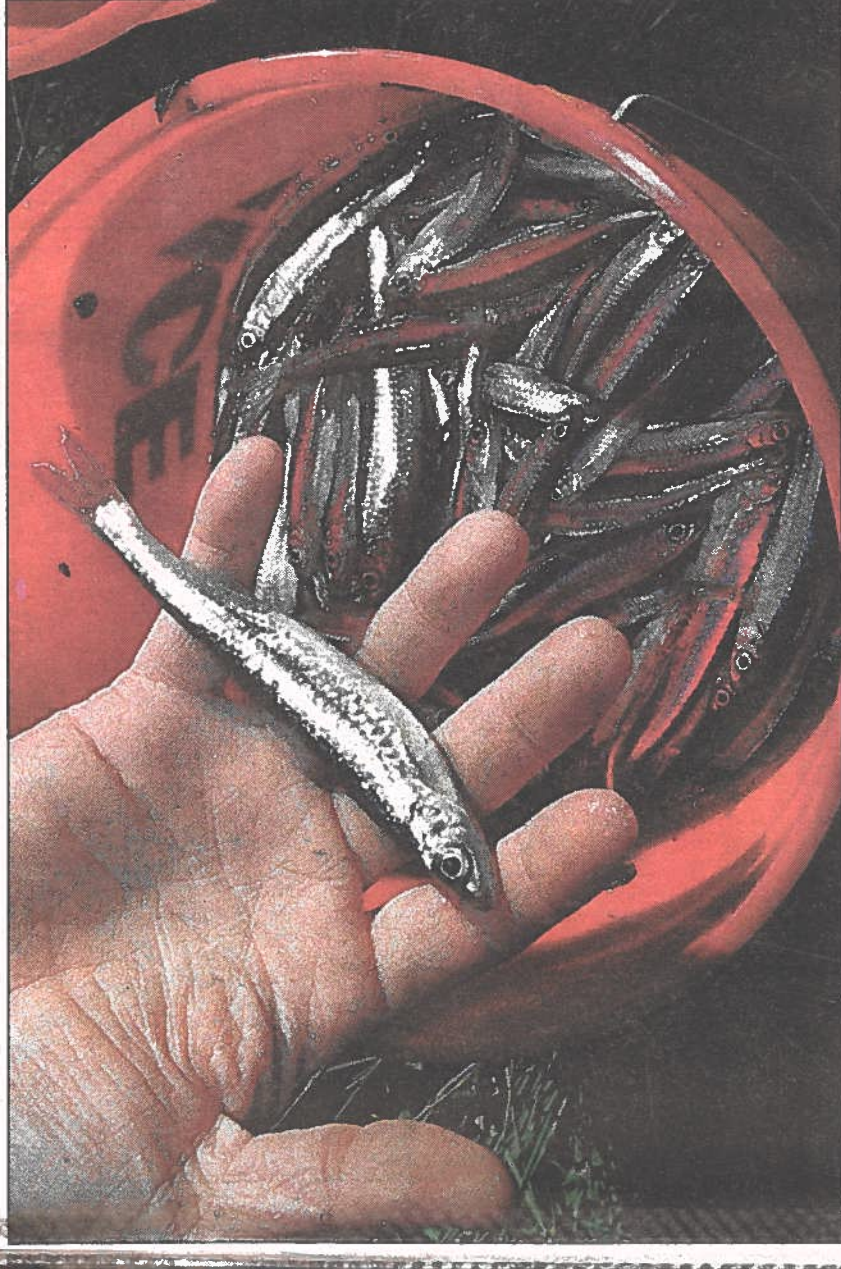
a smart cousin of the white eye. James says the fish population has made a full recovery.

"We asked in 2000 whether we could get back to where it was in a decade, and it's because that's how long it takes to grow a big fish," James said. "The guide services can catch 50 to 100 small-mouth bass in a day. We're finding 18-, 19-, 20-inch and even bigger small-mouth bass. The bass fishery is every bit as good or better."

Scott Pruitt said the fish kill is responsible for cleaner river banks. White River Rescue 2000 helped clean up the Moss Island Dump, removing bridge trestles and conducting ravine cleanups along 17 linear miles of the river bank.

"This disaster kind of turned people's interest to it," Pruitt said. "There was a huge outpouring to get the garbage out and clean the shorelines and take better care of it."

Maybe those snow-white rings are more blessing than curse. A reminder, not just of a disaster, but of a commu-



These are some of the 21 to 25 species of fish that the DNR found in White River after the 1999 fish kill along a stretch from the Raible Avenue bridge to the discharge area of the Anderson Wastewater Treatment Plant.

John P. Cleary, file / The Herald Bulletin

do that to our environment."

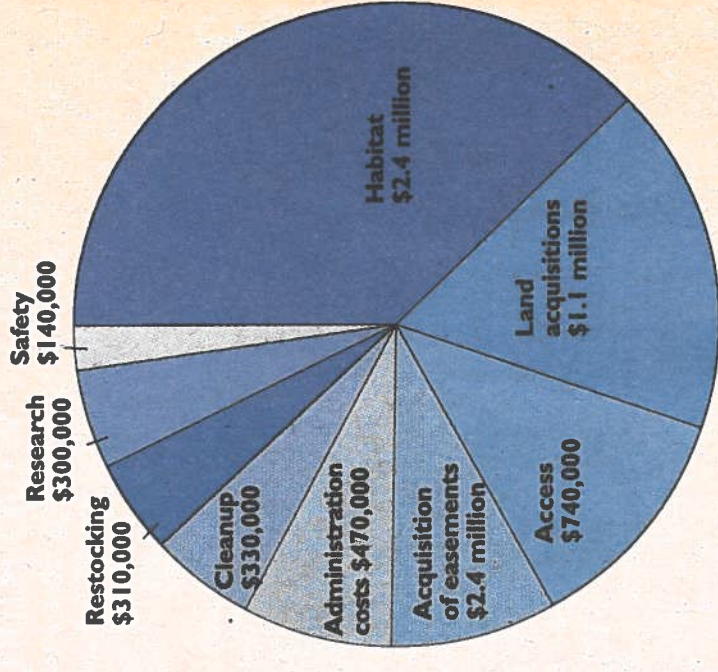
## River restocked

About \$310,000 of the more than \$6 million White River recovery project was spent on fish restocking. According to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, about 1.15 million fish from 13 species were used to fill the void left by the death of 4.26 million fish during the 1999 White River fish kill.

Species	Number of fish
Sauger	383,298
Channel catfish	328,429
Bluegill	204,743
Largemouth bass	123,988
Smallmouth bass	58,471
Rock bass	41,673
Crappie (black and white)	3,956
Flathead catfish	2,352
Freshwater drum	139
Shorthead redhorse	86
Bigmouth buffalo	34
Redear sunfish	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,147,192</b>

Source: Indiana Department of Natural Resources

## Disbursement of NRD funds for restoration



Settlements related to the December 1999 White River fish kill generated about \$6.32 million in natural resource damage (NRD) funds for river restoration. Here is a breakdown of how those funds were disbursed by three trustees, based on recommendations by a citizens advisory panel:

- \$2.4 million: Habitat restoration (650 acres)
- \$1.1 million: Fee simple land acquisitions (283 acres)
- \$740,000: New and upgraded public access sites
- \$525,000: Acquisition of conservation easements (265 acres)
- \$470,000: Administrative costs
- \$330,000: River cleanups
- \$310,000: Fish restocking and monitoring
- \$300,000: Research studies and GIS projects
- \$140,000: River safety projects

— Source: Indiana Department of Natural Resources