



CURRENT SITE

FUTURE VISION?

RESTORING ABANDONED LAND TO THE PUBLIC:

HOBART LEGACY NATURE PRESERVE

Delta Institute and our key partner Lake County (IN) Parks—along with numerous community groups and engaged residents—will restore 40 acres adjacent to high-traffic nature sites at the Hobart Nature District, benefitting stormwater management, native habitat, and creating a new recreational area.

This site was previously home to the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church Hall, and our efforts will restore the site to publicly accessible natural beauty, while honoring the site's legacy and history within Lake County.

Why our work is needed today

This restoration project site was the home of the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church Hall from the 1970s until 2007. A banquet center and parking lot was constructed for the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church Hall, which served as the main church for the Northwest Indiana Serbian community when the main church was destroyed by fire in Gary in 1978.

St. Sava's Church was rebuilt in Merrillville (where it stands today), with the 40-acre parcel continuing to serve as the Church Hall and picnic grounds until it was sold in 2009. After the property's sale it fell quickly into disrepair and was eventually and tragically ruined and razed, with consistent illegal dumping since.

The community has been actively working to improve these conditions, demonstrating a strong commitment to environmental preservation. After years of community engagement and advocacy, the site was able to be purchased in 2021 by Lake County Parks and Recreation Board, who is focused on restoring the site while providing expanded recreation access.

Brief Overview of What We're Doing

Recognizing and appreciating this rich history and critical community need, Delta Institute and Lake County Parks will restore a 40-acre Lake County Parks and Recreation Board-owned parcel, with 5 acres of permanent wetland creation and 33 acres of wet prairie and mesic

oak savanna (including some ephemeral wetlands) restoration. We will establish a recreational area to make this site accessible to the public.

Our project will increase climate resiliency via reducing stormwater flow via multi-million stormwater gallon management capacity, removing impervious surface, and promoting native species diversity.

Delta is already engaged with a broad spectrum of community stakeholders on the proposed scope; their feedback is incorporated into this proposal and project planning. Community-led activities will include restoration planning, planting, maintenance work, and public engagement. Wetland creation, habitat restoration, recreational opportunities, maintenance, and long-term stewardship plans will be created during the project. This project dovetails with multiple Delta-led projects in Lake County.

Our Impact

Decreasing localized flooding and increasing stormwater management: 4,601,015.3 gallons of stormwater annually.

Site restoration and debris removal: 40 total acres will be restored, with 5 acres of permanent wetland; 30 acres of mesic oak savanna, including ephemeral wetlands; and 3 acres of wet prairie.

Invasive species management: Based on initial parcel analysis, 20% of the site is

currently infested with invasive species; native habitat will be restored. **Public access and recreation:** The project will provide 2 acres for recreational trails, boardwalks, a small parking lot, and wayfinding amenities. These efforts are planned after restoration has been accomplished by 2027.

Our partners and collaborators

This project has received funding in 2024 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Sustain Our Great Lakes program. Delta Institute and Lake County Parks have secured substantial community involvement, including significant support from the Hobart Sanitary & Stormwater District Board, Hobart Parks Department, Friends of Robinson Lake, and the St. Sava Congregation.

More about who we are

This project is part of Delta's Nature-Based Climate Solutions initiative, which assists municipalities by integrating natural climate solutions and GI to reduce climate change impacts by capturing **100 million stormwater gallons** and leveraging **\$100 million in municipal GI investment**.

We work every day to create a more resilient region for all our Midwestern family, friends, and neighbors. Learn more at:

delta-institute.org/project/hobart-legacy



Delta Institute collaborates with communities to solve complex environmental challenges throughout the Midwest.

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Delta Institute

Delta Institute is a 501c3 nonprofit with an annual Platinum Seal of Transparency from Candid and a Four-Star Rating from Charity Navigator for our strong financial health and accountability.