

The ACRES Land Trust

ACRES Land Trust is a member-supported nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving land in northeast Indiana and portions of southern Michigan and northwest Ohio. The land trust began in 1960, and it now protects over 100 properties across its 27-county service area. The land trust acquires natural areas and working lands, like family farmland, with the goal of preserving them forever. ACRES offers trails at many nature preserves for free public use to inspire people to value, appreciate and support these places.

Today ACRES protects over 7,200 acres in the region. The nonprofit's most recent strategic plan involves growing its capacity in order to increase the amount of land acquired each year and expand the care of existing land. 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 and boundary markers.

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 Coppennoll 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."

In 2013, ACRES acquired Walter H. and E. Marie Myers Nature Preserve on Flowers Creek. This 157-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.



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