

## **Children's Garden and Natural Play Area Project – Sunset Hill Farm**

### **Project Background**

Porter County Parks and Recreation is currently in the design process of constructing and environmentally sustainable education facility at Sunset Hill County Park. The County has requested Coastal Zone Management funding for the design and installation of a Children's Garden and Natural Play Area to accompany the facility. CZM and match funding will cover the cost of a topographic map, a soil survey, sustainable materials, solar lighting, interpretive signage, and flora. The project area is approximately one acre in size.

Thousands of youth come to the park each year to participate in education programs, field trips and summer camps, which are focused on teaching them a love for nature, and respect and understanding for earth's natural resources as well as the specific flora and fauna of the Lake Michigan coastal area and Salt Creek Watershed.

The education programs incorporate the State of Indiana's curriculum standards for the public schools and are tailored to each grade level for students from kindergarten through the 6th grade. As part of that educational experience, the garden and play area will feature a butterfly and/or hummingbird garden, native plant garden, rain garden, functional art and musical instruments, a series of berms and swales that create play areas, tunnels and child-sized pathways that are created by natural elements, pathways, lighting, and water features that will be used directly in the environmental education program.

### **Historical Information**

Persuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1996 (NHPA), as amended, the Sunset Hill Farm Children's Play Area project information was sent to Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for review. In a letter dated September 5, 2012, the Indiana SHPO noted that the proposed project is in an environmental setting that is suitable to contain archaeological resources and therefore requested that the applicant perform a reconnaissance level archaeological survey. This survey was completed and a link is included on the NOAA website, for reference. The 2013 Archeological Field Reconnaissance at the Sunset Farm County Park in Porter County, Indiana, indicated that no historically or archaeological significant sites would be impacted by the proposed undertaking. Therefore, NOAA has made a determination of "No Historic Properties Affected" for this undertaking. Prior to making this determination, NOAA consulted with Mike Molnar, Indiana's Lake Michigan Coastal Management Program; Larry N. Stillwell of Archeological Consultants of Ossian; and Porter County Parks and Recreation. Please contact Elizabeth Mountz at [Elizabeth.Mountz@noaa.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Mountz@noaa.gov) or by phone at 301-713-3155 ext 148 if you have any comments.