

TOP STORY

## Three recreation projects underway to revitalize Wabash River

By JOHN HOLLANDER Staff Reporter

Sep 29, 2025

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Wabash River Enhancement Corporation Executive Director Stanton Lambert explains how the WREC greenway fits into the larger state  
Cooper Thelen | Staff Photographer

Greater Lafayette's iconic Wabash River is set to receive much-needed enhancements, including new trails, trail extensions, and recreational activities.

Recently-acquired grants, totaling \$55 million, has allowed for the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation to break ground on three long-time planned projects. A state initiative called READI provided a large amount of funds to start these quality-of-place projects that all will finish by 2026.

WREC has been around since 2005 and has been planning projects since 2008. Their main goals are development, education, and cleaning of the Wabash River. Programs like Wonders on the Wabash and water sampling volunteering take place multiple times a year, providing opportunities for the community to get involved.

Tom Murtaugh, a Tippecanoe County Commissioner and the vice president of the WREC board, believes there is great potential in the river.

"I was born and raised here in Tippecanoe County, and I can remember when I grew up the river was just something that was ignored," he said. "Nobody would even consider looking at it as a recreational amenity."

The first of these READI projects is an extension of a trail down Sagamore Parkway on the west side of the river. The trail is being brought down under the bridge giving access to River Road. It will also connect to the previously state-constructed pedestrian walkway across the bridge.

The second project is located at the same bridge but on the east side. This will be a ramp from Sagamore Parkway connecting down to the Heritage Trail. Both of these are expected to be completed by the end of the year and will be ADA-compliant.

The third project is located farther up River Road, slightly past River Bend hospital. A canoe and kayak access point is being constructed on the river. This will involve a floating dock, ramp system, and a weir to control the water flow by the dock. This project will be finished by spring 2026.

"I'm most excited about canoeing and kayaking. I've long been an advocate of 'we need more access to the river,' because we don't have a lot of access points," Murtaugh said.

For future developments, a \$25 million federal grant, RAISE, will be used. An entirely new

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trail along the west side of the river will be constructed all the way out to Amphitheater Park.

A pedestrian bridge will be built across the river located at Mascouten Park. A second bridge across a deep ravine will also be built for access into Amphitheater Park. This project is now in the planning phase and is expected to complete in 2029.

Executive director of WREC Stanton Lambert promised once the riverfront development is finished, there will be a cool place for Purdue students and the community to hang out with trail systems for them to use.

“When we get the READI project done, you’re going to be able to come down, get on the Heritage Trail, and come right down into downtown Lafayette and never be on the street,” he said.

Funding has been a large factor in these developments. Over \$13 million has been donated by North Central Health Services, which operates River Bend Hospital, since WREC’s inception in 2005. Almost \$1.5 million has been donated specifically for the READI projects.

“These projects are costly, no doubt, but there’s a return on investment,” Lambert said.

WREC partnered with Purdue Research Foundation when PRF submitted an application to receive a Lilly Endowment Incorporated College, Community, Collaboration Initiative Grant. \$5 million of this grant was given to WREC, also for the READI Projects.

The area has an end goal of creating a looped trail system that reaches Prophetstown State Park.

“People are going to use that nonstop with their families to be able to make that whole loop through Lafayette and West Lafayette,” said Lafayette Mayor and WREC Board President Tony Roswarski. “(They’ll) come back home and never get off a paved trail. I mean, people are going to eat that up.”

Roswarski only had positive things to say about the collaboration in the Greater Lafayette area.

“Lafayette, West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County get along great,” he said. “We all just try to work together to do the right thing for our citizens.”







**9/25/25 Roswarski talks about WREC**

Cooper Thelen | Staff Photographer Sep 28, 2025

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