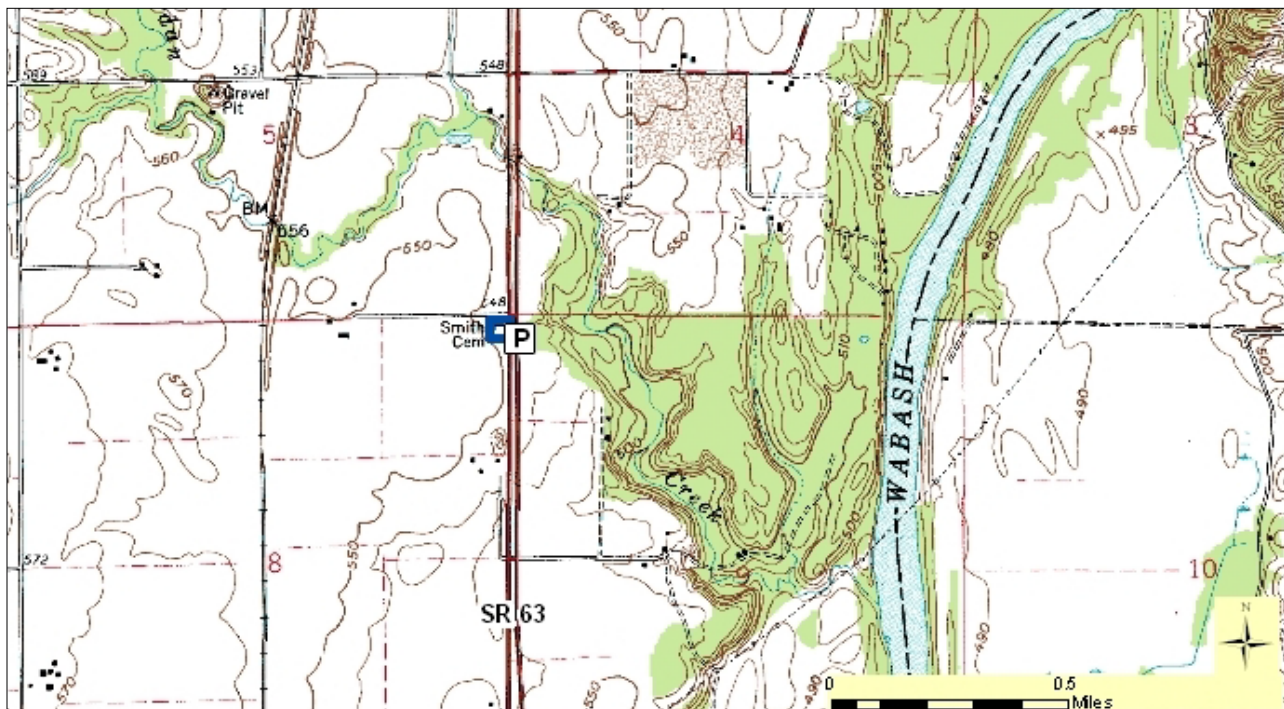# Smith Cemetery Nature Preserve

County: Vermillion   Size: 1 acre
Ownership: Highland Township
Parking: 40.02625, -87.45092

Location and Access

There is very limited parking and no trail. Smith Cemetery is located about 2 miles southwest of Perrysville, on the southwest corner of SR 63 and a farm lane. When coming from the south, there is a crossing across SR 63.

Description: Prairies once covered over 3 million acres in Indiana, including nearly one-fourth of Vermillion County. Due to the high fertility of prairie soils, conversion to agricultural fields was swift and thorough. Some-times in areas where prairies originally occurred, railroad rights-of-way and pioneer cemeteries (as in this case) harbor some of the few local prairie remnants. In the late 1970s, a number of prairie plants were discovered at Smith Cemetery growing in the fencerows, around the gravestones, and in the cemetery itself. Discussions by the Division of Nature Preserves with the Township Trustee resulted in an agreement to stop mowing and manage the cemetery as a prairie. That has been ongoing since 1981. The prairie has responded favorably, and now over 30 species of prairie plants have spread throughout the cemetery. Among those found here are prairie dock, Culver's root, yellow coneflower, leadplant, pale purple coneflower, white prairie clover, prairie alumroot, hoary puccoon, New Jersey tea, wild quinine, showy tick-trefoil, Indian grass, and big and little bluestem. In 1997, the cemetery was officially dedicated as a state nature preserve. The earliest burials here, made directly into prairie sod, date back to the 1820s. There have been no burials here in recent decades. Information about those buried here may be found in *Inventory Listing of Stones For Smith Cemetery, Vermillion County, Indiana* by Lois Gray. This book may be found at libraries in Perrysville, Newport and Cayuga.

Further Information:

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