



Indiana Karst Conservancy, Inc.

“PROTECTING CAVES THROUGH ACTIVE CONSERVATION”

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February 28, 2022

Eric Holcomb
Governor
200 W. Washington St., Room 206,
Indianapolis, IN 46204
eholcomb@gov.in.gov

Mike Smith
Commissioner
Indiana Department of Transportation
100 N. Senate Ave., Room N758
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Michael.Smith@indot.in.gov

Jason DuPont
Project Manager
Mid-States Corridor Project
Vincennes University Jasper Campus
Center for Technology, Innovation and Manufacturing, Room 202
850 College Ave.
Jasper, IN 47546
jdupont@midstatescorridor.com

RE: Comments on Mid-States Corridor Project Tier 1 Environmental Impact Study

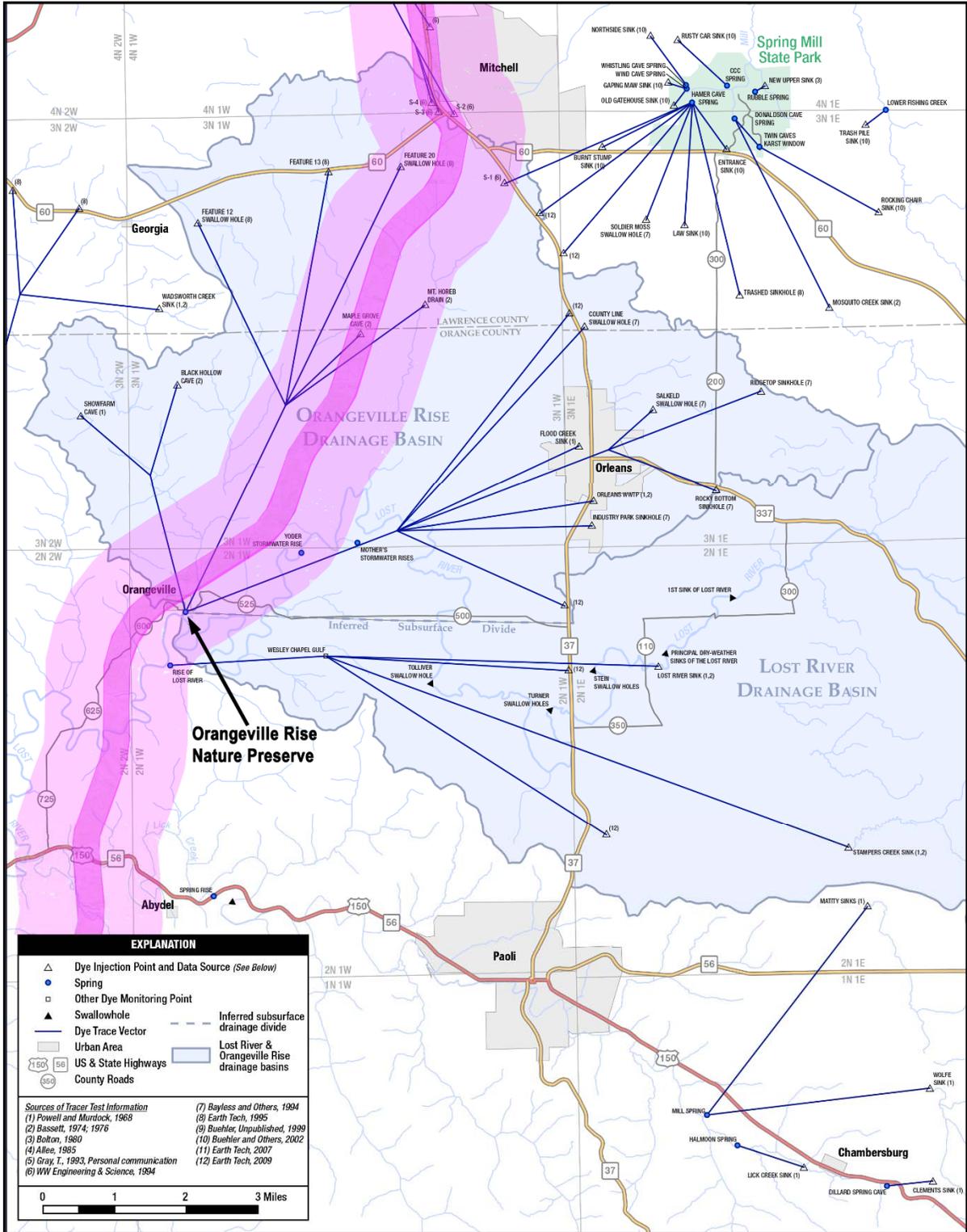
Dear Governor Holcomb, Commissioner Smith, and Mr. DuPont:

The Indiana Karst Conservancy (IKC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating our citizens about and protecting caves and karst in Indiana. Founded thirty-six years ago, our organization over the years has typically remained neutral on infrastructure projects, except when a project appears to be a direct threat to caves and karst landscapes.

As the preferred route decision on the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Mid-States Corridor Project nears, we wish to go on record that we oppose the selection of either of the new-terrain Route O and Route M alternatives. Either of these proposed routes would have significant, irreversible impacts to the karst areas they would cross during the construction process, and then on-going impacts from non-point source stormwater run-off as well as point source contamination from vehicle accidents, chemical spills, and other pollutants.

In addition to the overall/general impact that both proposed Routes O and M would have on the karst belt in southern Indiana, the IKC owns a state dedicated nature preserve and

National Natural Landmark, the Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve in Orange County which the Route O corridor physically runs very close to, and more importantly, if selected, will traverse eight miles of the Orangeville Rise drainage basin (see map below). This new-terrain highway will, without question, damage the water quality and subterranean fauna that depend on the miles of known and unknown subterranean conduits beneath this landscape.



In addition to the major impact on the Lost River Drainage Basin and to the IKC's Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve, we have identified over 260 caves and karst features that will be negatively impacted by Route "O", and 163 caves and karst features that will be negatively impacted by Route "M", should either of these alternatives be selected as the preferred route. The significant impact to this fragile ecosystem is a price too high to pay for the Mid-States Corridor.

We wish to remain neutral on the other alternative routes. However, with your recent decision to upgrade US 231 between Jasper and Crane, it appears to us that the primary purpose of this entire Mid-States Corridor has now been rendered moot. We hope a "no build" option on the Mid-States Corridor will be recommended when the Tier 1 DEIS is released.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew Selig". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Matthew Selig
IKC President