

Pathways to Nature

A Newsletter of the Webster County Conservation Board

January 2020



IOWA'S NATURAL RESOURCE & OUTDOOR RECREATION TRUST FUND

Our VISION is clear in 2020...Our time is NOW

By Matt Cosgrove, Director

Iowans have a reputation of being hard workers, honest, neighborly, connected to the land and genuinely "Iowa nice".

Unfortunately this reputation doesn't hold true when we look at our state's recent record in protecting its natural resources and investing in outdoor recreation. It's been almost ten years since Iowa voters amended the constitution to create *Iowa's Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund*. This was no small undertaking, passing two sessions of the legislature and an overwhelming vote of 63% of Iowa voters in 2010. Yet here we are fifteen years after the legislature established the Sustainable Funding Committee to identify solutions to address Iowa's water quality issues, soil loss, recreation and park funding challenges and general "quality of life" amenities, and not one dime has been deposited in the trust fund.

The Sustainable Funding Committee was made up of a diverse group of Iowa stakeholders, including commodity groups, conservation organizations, public health officials, sportsmen/women, legislators and environmental supporters. The charge of the committee was simple – explore funding mechanisms to better address Iowa's natural resource and recreation needs. The committee explored a variety of options, but eventually settled on 3/8 of one cent sales tax increase. This model has been used successfully in Minnesota and Missouri for over three decades. The new funding was designed to provide approximately \$150 million dollars annually that would flow through existing programs and be accountable and measurable in an annual report. A funding formula was created and agreed upon to distribute the funds into seven categories – Natural Resources, Soil Conservation & Water Protection, Watershed Protection, REAP (Resource Enhancement & Protection), Local Conservation Partnerships, Trails and Lake Restoration.

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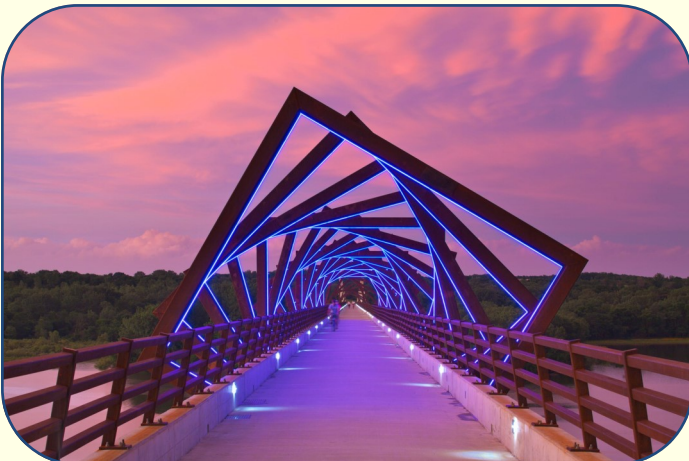
So what is all the fuss about?

- Iowa ranks 47th in public lands, with only 3% open to public use
- 1 in 5 Iowa children are considered obese
- Over 40% of our lakes and rivers are considered too polluted for fishing and swimming
- Over the past two decades, Iowa has lost 1.6 million acres of habitat
- 25% of Iowans are not physically active, costing the state an estimated \$5.3 billion dollars annually in medical costs and lost worker productivity
- Iowa comprises 3.3% of the land area in the Missouri Watershed, yet is responsible for 55% of the nitrate-nitrogen pollution in the river
- 89 of Iowa's 99 counties have seen their population decline over the past decade
- Only about 50% of Iowa's university graduates with a bachelor's degree are able to find a job in Iowa after graduation
- More than 90% of Iowa's wetlands have been drained, resulting in 951 flood-related disaster declarations at a cost of \$13.5 billion dollars
- Iowa is losing topsoil at an average of 5 tons per acre annually



While the list can go on and on, it's not all gloom and doom for our great state. There are many positives to focus on as we look to 2020 and beyond.

- Each year 30 million visits are made to Iowa's lakes and rivers generating almost \$2 billion in spending
- Towns like Madrid are reaping the economic benefits of the High Trestle Trail with over 250,000 visitors spending \$6.7 million dollars in Boone and Dallas Counties last year
- Outdoor recreation in Iowa generates \$8.7 million dollars in consumer spending



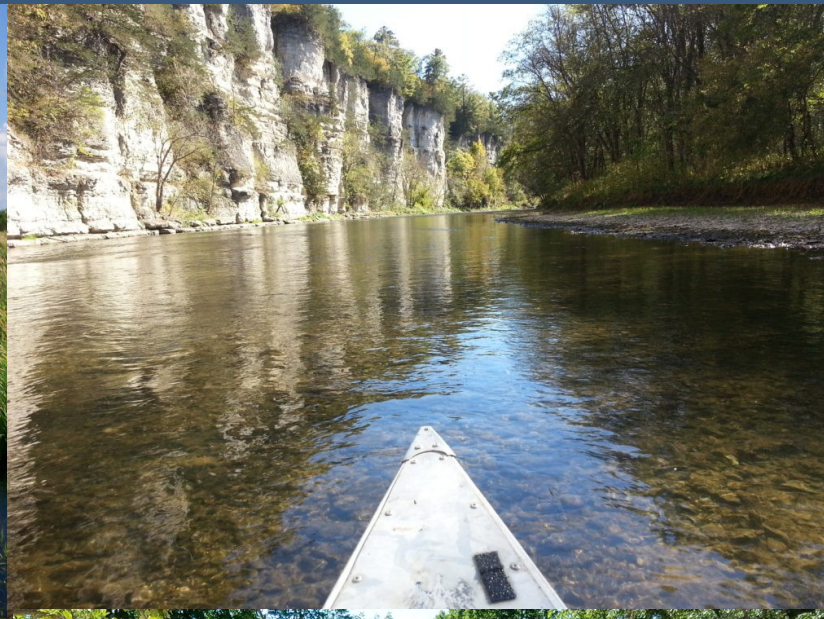
- In 2018 the governor and legislature took the first small step in passing SF512 to dedicate funding toward the Nutrient Reduction Strategy
- The Charles City White Water Park is boasting a \$1 million economic impact on the town of 7,300
- A child's risk of obesity can be reduced by 60% if he or she lives close to parks, trails and green space
- Iowans voted for the Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund in 2010, creating the road map for Iowa's path to success

We've all heard the saying, "all good things take time". The time is NOW for the "good things"! The time for talking is over. NOW is the time to clean up our rivers and lakes, protect our soils, invest in recreation, build healthy, vibrant communities, create opportunities to improve the health of Iowans, expand our trail network, repair our park infrastructure, provide access to quality outdoor experiences for our children and create an environment that will attract and retain a skilled workforce.

There are good conversations occurring across the state regarding potential funding for Iowa's *Natural Resource & Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund*. I would encourage you to be a part of the conversation. Contact your legislators and encourage their support in making 2020 the year Iowa invests in our natural resources, recreation, water quality, soil conservation, rural revitalization, economic development, public health, workforce and Iowa's future! The time is NOW!!

Additional information about sustainable funding for our natural resources can be found at www.iowaswaterandlandlegacy.org

#FUNDTHETRUST





2019 Friends of Webster County Conservation Annual Meeting

A chili feed surrounded by the beautiful fall leaves changing colors - what says FALL more than that? The Friends of Webster County Conservation recently celebrated their 2019 Annual Meeting at The Lodge at Camp WaNoKi. **In 2019, the Friends have donated \$9,000 for Camp WaNoKi improvements.** The evening was spent enjoying outdoor activities throughout the camp, a campfire, and of course, good food.

The Friends are an invaluable asset to our area!

"Truly Great Friends Are Hard to Find, Difficult To Leave, & Impossible To Forget"



At Right:
*Newly Appointed Chairman
of the Friends of Webster
County Conservation,
Tony Recker, leads the
business meeting*



Webster County Hosts District Meeting



37 fellow Conservation employees gathered at The Lodge at Camp Wa-No-Ki Wednesday, October 23rd. Webster County played host to the district meeting held quarterly by county conservation departments. Webster County last hosted this meeting in 2016. Representatives from 8 different counties came to hear and see the updates Webster County has been working on.

Conservation staff provided updates regarding recent projects and plans. A highlight of conversation was Webster County's newest overnight accommodations: Tiny Homes and Yurts.

A rainy afternoon wasn't enough to slow down the tour. The group was able to visit Gypsum City OHV Park and explore all 3 tiny homes. Travel continued to Kennedy Park where they were able to see inside a Yurt and visit with Eric Klein of Klein Construction, who assembled the yurts.

It was a great day to show off what the staff at Webster County Conservation has been working on and to welcome visitors to our county!



THANK YOU!!

The Elanco logo is a blue parallelogram with the word "Elanco" in white, italicized, sans-serif font. A small "TM" trademark symbol is at the bottom right of the parallelogram.

Recently volunteers from *Elanco Animal Health* joined the Conservation Department Staff to lend a helping hand on a variety of projects.

The volunteer effort was part of *Elanco's* "Global Day of Service". "Each September or October, more than 24,000 Lilly employees spend a day out of the office, helping friends and neighbors in communities around the world. Since the program launched in 2008, employees in over 65 countries have given more than 1 million hours through Lilly Global Day of Service initiatives. It is one of the largest single-day volunteer programs of any global enterprise." (*Eli Lilly website*)

A HUGE "Thank You" to our friends at *Elanco* for helping keep our parks looking great!! These projects would not have been possible without your generous volunteer efforts!!

Groups from Elanco were able to stain the shelter and paint picnic tables at Veteran's Memorial Park, stain parts of the Natural Playscape at Kennedy Park and trim trails along the Lizard Creek Access.

Their time and talents are much appreciated!



Nielsen Attends NOHVCC Conference

Tasha Nielsen, Natural Resource and Trail Technician at Gypsum City OHV Park, attended the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council's (NOHVCC) annual conference this past October. This year's conference was held in Reno, Nevada. NOHVCC is a nonprofit public benefit organization and is primarily funded by the Motorcycle Industry Council, Specialty Vehicle Institute of America and the Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association. NOHVCC exists to create a positive future for OHV Recreation.

While in Reno, Nielsen took part in a mobile workshop that consisted of a guided tour of Prison Hill Recreation Area located in Carson City, Nevada. This 2,500 acre area was once owned by the Bureau of Land Management and was transferred over to Carson City in 2015. While participants were on the guided tour, they were able to stop and gain some insight on trail layout and design and interact with the trail design team on site.



After enjoying the great outdoors and experiencing the riding scenery Nevada has to offer, the conference continued at Whitney Peak Hotel in Reno. While there, Nielsen was able to attend many informative presentations highlighting all of the great work OHV enthusiasts like herself are up to in their respective states. Nielsen also gave a presentation of her own on all of the new and exciting things happening at Gypsum City!



Nielsen has been an Iowa Partner for NOHVCC since 2015. She has worked hard to stay up to date on OHV issues here in Iowa and inform NOHVCC of the hurdles, successes and proven practices in the area. At this year's conference she was voted to extend her partnership and join the Board of Directors for NOHVCC. Nielsen states, "I am excited for this opportunity to work with and learn from OHV enthusiasts all over the country."



WCCB Area Spotlight

Meier Memorial Marsh

Webster County Restoration: Meier Marsh
Clare, IA



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The Meier Memorial Marsh Management Area is located on the Calhoun-Webster County border along South Lizard Creek. The property consists of 35 acres of wetland, prairie and stream corridor. The area is open to public hunting, wildlife viewing and hiking.

The property has been owned and managed by Webster County since 2000 when Zane & Peggy Meier, along with Zane's mother Grace, donated 13 acres to the Conservation Board. The Meier Family was deep-rooted in farming and conservation in the area. The Meier's wanted to see the area managed for wildlife habitat and public use for future generations.

Shortly after the donation, the family offered an additional 22 acres to the Conservation Board through a bargain sale. The board was successful in receiving a State Habitat Grant, funded through hunters habitat fee, and a variety of conservation organizations (Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever Chapters—Webster, Calhoun & Humboldt) that made the purchase possible.

Past management on the area has consisted of prescribed burning, food plots, wetland construction, streambank stabilization, tree planting and nesting structures for geese and ducks.

The board has recently developed a plan to implement a variety of habitat projects to improve the management area. Habitat practices will include: additional streambank stabilization, invasive species removal, prairie re-construction, wetland expansion, oxbow restoration and improved access.

The improvements will be funded through a variety of public/private partnerships. Improvements are scheduled to begin in 2020 with a generous \$7,500 donation from Cargill!!

Upcoming Public Programs & Events

Your Guide To The Outside

JANUARY

Moorland Pond Trout Stocking

Saturday, January 18—11:00—1:00pm

Join Webster County Conservation and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for a fun and informative day on the ice. Learn tricks and tips about ice fishing while IDNR Fisheries releases 1,500 Rainbow Trout into Moorland Pond.



Cross Country Skiing

As soon as we get 3 or more inches of snow, clinics and ski rental information will be posted on our Facebook page or call 515-576-4258 for more information.



FEBRUARY

Cross Country Skiing

As soon as we get 3 or more inches of snow, clinics and ski rental information will be posted on our Facebook page or call 515-576-4258 for more information.

2019 A Record Year for Lights At Kennedy

More than 2,800 vehicles passed through the display area between Dec. 6 and Dec. 22 located at the John F Kennedy Park Campground. A recording setting 505 vehicles in one night happened this year on December 22nd. At one point, vehicles filled the park road all the way to Nelson Ave.

\$15,000 was raised, the majority of that going to Backpack Buddies. **Thank you to the Fort Dodge Noon Sertoma group and the Fort Dodge Young Professionals for putting on such a wonderful holiday event!**



Photo: Messenger News

For the most up to date information,



**LIKE us on Facebook:
Webster County Conservation**

mycountyparks.com



Let's Be Friends!

*With your support, we can make a difference in Webster County now and
for future generations*



Sign Up Today!

Fill out this form and mail to:

**Friends of Webster County
Conservation
1415 Nelson Ave
Fort Dodge, IA 50501**

Membership Form

☐ **Membership** **\$25** _____

☐ **Business** **\$100** _____

Name

Address

City, State Zip

Email

Phone

The mission of the Friends of Webster County Conservation is to provide awareness, appreciation, and the preservation of Webster County's natural resources for future generations.

The "Friends of Webster County Conservation" is a non-profit, 501c3 organization that helps the WCCB with volunteers and raising funds to enhance environmental education, outdoor recreation, and conservation projects in Webster County.

1415 Nelson Ave
Fort Dodge, IA 50501
515-576-4258

conservation@webstercountyia.org

www.mycountyparks.com/Webster.aspx



Webster County Conservation

STAFF

Matt Cosgrove	Director
Cody Peterson	Operations Supervisor
Darren Herzog	Park Ranger
Brad Janssen	Park Ranger
Karen Hansen	EE Coordinator
Erin Ford	Naturalist
Andy Stanberg	IRVM/Vegetation Specialist
Tasha Nielsen	Natural Res./Trail Tech
Adam Moeding	Natural Res./Trail Tech
Kyle Redmond	Natural Res./Trail Tech
Joni Hefley	Office Manager

BOARD MEMBERS

Nick Carlson	Fort Dodge
Geri Winge	Fort Dodge
Jerry Beck	Fort Dodge
Kirk Seltz	Badger
Beth Collins	Fort Dodge

The Webster County Conservation Board meets monthly on the second Tuesday of each month. The meetings are held at the Kennedy Park Office building at 5:30 p.m. All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.



The Webster County Conservation Board in the provision of services and facilities to the public does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age, or disability. If anyone believes he/she has been subject to such discrimination, he/she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Webster County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.