

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2021 BOARD MEETING**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, September 9, 2021, at Little Sioux Park beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling (via Zoom), Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Suzan Boden

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder, Nathan Silfies, Derek Bean, Thomas Cobb, Morgan Erdman, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Mark Monson, County Supervisor
Don and Susan Mohning
Jim Mendenhall
Dan Jones

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gehling called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The above-listed Brown's Lake residents were present to express concerns about the low lake level and potential of a winter fish kill. They also questioned whether the lake could be dredged while the level is so low. Dan directed them to contact the DNR with their concerns as it is a state-owned lake. Dan obtained their email addresses and said he would share information he had recently received from the DNR. The residents expressed appreciation for the park improvements being made by the county. Dan assured them that he is confident that the DNR will get the lake level worked out, therefore the board is willing to invest in all these improvements.

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Neil, second by Suzan.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE: Aye: Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Suzan Boden
Nay: None
Absent: None

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the July 14, 2021 Regular Meeting.
- C2. Approve the July 2021 and August 2021 Claims and Expenditures

C3. Receive and Place on File the June Final Accrued FY21, July 2021, and August 2021 Financial/Budget Report and the 4th Quarter FY21 Reserve Fund Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:

- Siouxland Community Foundation for \$5,000 grant for Tale Trail
- Chuck Johnson for Loess Hills framed map
- Ashley Schmillen for \$400 for birdfeeder adoption in honor of Jack & June Perrin
- Jameley Wanning for snacks and water for camps
- William & Dianne Ryan for \$200 for Mac Smith Memorial
- Dan & Sally Hartley for \$125 for beehive & Aquarium adoption
- CF Industries for \$5,000 for Tale Trail
- Mark & Joli Gehring \$100 cash donation
- Loess Hills Audubon Society \$175 cash donation
- Jon Nylen & Leesa McNeil for tanned bison hide
- Martin Fee for \$100 cash donation for Nature Center
- Jackie Warnstadt for \$25 cash donation for Nature Center
- Gene & Ginger Martin for \$750 for Scarlet the Red-tailed Hawk sponsorship

ITEM R2. Southwood Assistant Resource Manager Update

Dan reported that Southwood Assistant Resource Manager position application had a July 30th deadline, but not very many applications were received. He stated that although there were a couple good ones, a larger pool of candidates was desired. The position was reopened to get additional applications before conducting interviews. He explained that since law enforcement is needed in the position, the candidate will be required to successfully complete a physical pre-test prior to hiring if they need to attend the academy.

ITEM R3. Little Sioux River Water Trail Letter of Support

Dan asked for board action to approve a letter of support for the Little Sioux water trail that he is working on with Supervisor Radig. He explained that this is the Inkapuduta Canoe Trail that District 3 has had on the books for years and the letter of support is an agreement to pursue grant money for the trail. DNR grant money will cover the cost of the study. Designation as a DNR water trail will provide marketing on a statewide level in DNR publications and maps and grant money for signage along the trail and at access ramps.

MOTION by Neil, second by Cindy.

To approve and authorize the director to sign a letter of support for the Little Sioux River water trail.²³⁻²¹

VOTE: Aye: Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Suzan Boden
Nay: None
Absent: None

ITEM R4. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake Projects

a. Campground

Brian gave an update on the Bigelow Park campground redesign to add sewer hookups and change the layout to accommodate larger campers and provide more living space. Mike Barkley has drawn up plans and estimated the cost of the sewer upgrade at \$65,000, including parts and labor. In addition, WCCB would need to purchase the lift stations at approximately

²³⁻²¹ To approve and authorize the director to sign a letter of support for the Little Sioux River water trail.

\$16,000. Dan warned that there may be a couple sites where sewer cannot be added due to being too low. It was acknowledged that fees for the full hook-up sites would need to be increased but would remain competitive.

MOTION by Chris, second by Suzan.

To approve the proposed campground upgrades with sewer hook-ups.²⁴⁻²¹

VOTE: Aye: Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Suzan Boden

Nay: None

Absent: None

b. Park Roads Bid

Dan reported that he met with the County Engineer's staff last week, and they have been working on plans for the Bigelow Park roads.

Brian showed a map and stated that the concrete would extend past where the current hard surface ends to alleviate some of the dust for homeowners and reduce future dust control costs. They will provide a bid packet to present at the October meeting. He explained that they would be doing the work in sections and finding alternate routes for residents to get in and out.

Dan stated that the Engineer's office would put together the bid packets prior to the October meeting and then help put the bids out between December and February. The project could possibly start in April with completion in mid-May, but likely not in time to open May 1st. They asked us to consider adding a bonus for early completion into the contract. To make that determination, the board will need information on the revenue that would be lost by not having the park open during that period. Dan suggested that the fee increase be decided next month so revenues could be predicted accurately. It was also noted that a penalty would be added for late completion as well.

Dan explained that the bond will take 6-8 weeks to put together. He said that originally campground and sewer upgrade was going to be included in the bond, but instead will be done through the CIP fund to avoid having to pay interest on the bond this early.

Dan presented estimated costs for the projects anticipated to be covered in the bond. He noted that the concrete came in at \$41/square yard rather than the \$80-100 they originally estimated, bringing the estimate for the roads project to \$605,968. He stated that the \$1.2 million bond would be used for the roads project first. Remaining funds will then be applied to the beach and concessions, playground, and tornado shelters for other parks until they run out. Dan plans to meet with landowners next month to show them the plans and convey concern about resident ingress/egress and inconvenience.

c. Beach & Concessions

Brian reported that delivery of the 500 tons of beach sand for Bigelow Park has started. Several loads at 30 tons each have been delivered so far, and it is high-quality sand.

²⁴⁻²¹ To approve the proposed campground upgrades with sewer hook-ups.

Dan added that the sidewalk holding the beach in will be completed this fall. Secondary Roads staff will set the points, because their GPS is more accurate. It will then be scraped down to that level, and a contractor will come in and pour the cement.

ITEM R5. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. October Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on October 14, 2021, at Southwood Conservation Area.

b. Oak Ridge Hungry Canyons Grant – Dam Repair

Brian stated that in anticipation of the upcoming dam repair, staff has been clearing trees to allow equipment to get in there. Their access point will be the abandoned parking lot.

Dan stated that the Hungry Canyons grant application has been submitted and approved. A 20% match is required but the engineer's staff time can be counted as an in-kind match, leaving a minimal amount to pay out of pocket. The Engineer's office will let the bids and take care of the whole process.

c. Little Sioux Park – North End Gravel Excavation/Trail Information

Brian and Dan stated that the engineer will have crews clearing and prepping the land to the north of Little Sioux Park for excavation and gravel removal starting in mid-September. They found a few oak trees that they will try to leave if possible. They are also looking for a place to put the overburden, and a lower area on the south was suggested as it would be a good natural expansion of the campground loop.

They have asked to run a tube under the park trail, so they can pump water to the river to lower pond levels back there. They would need to remove a small section of trail to install the tube, gravel it as a temporary fix, and then finish it with concrete later.

Dan stated that they will turn the land over to WCCB when the mining is done in five or more years. Mark Nagra said he is working with the county attorney to do the legal descriptions and get an agreement in writing, but it will take time.

d. Peters Pit – Engineers Request

Dan stated that he had received a request from the engineer to mine more gravel from Peters Pit. They believe there is approximately 50-70,000 cubic tons of gravel. The old agreement expired in December of 2018, so a new agreement would need to be negotiated.

e. Grant Updates

Dan announced that he has submitted a REAP grant request for \$775,500 and a MRHD grant request for \$250,000 on the Salsness property acquisition. He is also working on a Turkey Federation grant application for \$10,000 for that property.

f. Snyder Bend & Brown's Lake Water Updates

Dan reported that he had gotten a text from Doug Chaffa reporting that the Snyder Bend water levels are at 3' on the logs, the tube is open at 16", and water has reached the dike. They are getting it flooded, and the water is coming up. As soon as they stop pumping, it will go down to the river level. They had to clean out a beaver dam.

The Brown's Lake water level has gone down considerably over the summer and is at a critical stage for the fish population going into fall and winter. MidAmerican Energy has been pumping as much as they can right now. When they are running the plant, they cannot pump as much as when it isn't running. Park staff said that there is 6-7" in the pipe. Ben Wallace added another gauge, and Josh is logging it weekly if not daily. Recent rains did bring it up a couple inches. The water study committee will be getting together with MidAmerican to determine how many gallons need to be pumped daily. The water level is a big concern, and Dan get calls about it daily.

Aaron stated that he is working on talking to Ben Wallace about using the time of low water levels to our advantage and see what can be done to dredge it. He encouraged the residents to get a lake association or Isaac Walton League and raise funds for improvements.

g. Solar Information

Dan received a quote of \$182,000 to install a solar system at the nature center with 50% of electrical costs being covered. The system would be owned by the WCCB and would have to be paid for up front. The panels would cover the entire roof of the nature center which could detract from the appearance of the building. Dan said that he could invite the company representative to present details at a future board meeting if there is interest.

Mark Monson stated that the Board of Supervisors got a pitch from them on Tuesday and are very interested in doing it at the nature center as a test project for the new jail. It would have to be bid out to other companies also. It was agreed that Dan and Brian should contact Kenny Schmitz and Rocky DeWitt about working with the Board of Supervisors on it.

h. Old Business

Dan took a moment to recognize the Little Sioux staff who were present. Brief discussion was held regarding the swans and the signage, which is planned to be installed very soon. The signage was delayed because of work being done on the old school house. The deck overlook, which was approved a year ago, has not been done yet because construction prices were up.

(Aaron left the meeting. Suzan assumed the role of chairperson.)

Brian reported that the Salsness pond is filling up and the seeding is doing well. The dam was seeded first because it was most critical for erosion, and then the side slope was done. Rye was put down on the bottom part, and it will be seeded this fall. He will bring pictures to the next board meeting.

i. Other Business

None

2. Nature Center Activities

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report was presented.
- Dawn noted that the swan signs mentioned earlier include a wing span comparison and a donor sign which is very important.
- Dawn acknowledged Theresa, Kari and the summer interns for their work over the summer, as well as all the park staff for their help with programs held in the parks.
- Theresa put together a number comparison for summer camps the last few years. This year camp registrations were at full capacity, but not all actually showed up. A smaller number of youth were reached through camps, but were reached in other areas. Groups such as Beyond the Bell, Summer Y, and various preschools etc. were able to be accommodated. Public canoeing, kayaking, and fishing programs were held.
- Naturalists and interns staffed a booth at the Woodbury County Fair and had good attendance. Kari will be at the Clay County Fair on Monday morning.
- The Tale Trail project received a \$5,000 grant from the Siouxland Community Foundation, as well as an additional \$5,000 gift from CF industries. Other donations and funds have been raised, and installation is anticipated to begin this fall.
- Nature Calls will take place on September 18th. Board members were thanked for their help in promoting the event and getting sponsors. Over \$25,000 has been raised by underwriting sponsors. Masks will not be required. Food costs have gone up quite a bit. A draft of the auction brochure was handed out.
- The nature center will be participating in the Siouxland Big Give one day of online giving on October 5th. Funds raised will be earmarked to go towards animals.
- Theresa, Kari & Dawn have been working on plans for hosting the Iowa Association of Naturalists fall workshop at the nature center on November 3-5. Three pre-workshops will be held, including pheasant hunting at Owego with some of our field staff and a museum tour led by Dawn.

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- The parks just finished one of the busier weekends on Labor Day. The Little Sioux beach is now closed for the season.
- Little Sioux had a Conservation Corps crew for a week to work on clearing more ridgetop remnant prairie.
- Staff has been pumping at Owego. Brian played a drone video showing the area.
- The Legacy Greenwing monument plaques installed in 2008 at Owego were recently stolen. Brian talked to the Ducks Unlimited group who raised the funds for them, and they said this is a first for them and they don't have the funds to replace them. Bronze isn't worth much melted down, but it would cost \$7,300 to replace the plaques. Dan expressed concern that it would happen again if replaced and stated that it has been reported to the sheriff's office. Staff suggested a less expensive metal or plastic sign. Brian will put together some options for the board.
- Little Sioux staff has cleared some small trees to open the access to the Oak Ridge Dam site that will be repaired this fall. The contractor will clear the large trees.
- Nathan Silfies, Resource Manager at Little Sioux Park, reported that the park has been very busy this summer. He stated that there was a little complaining about the price increase at the beginning of the season and noted that people like to see they are getting more if they are paying more. It was acknowledged that adding water to the Bellamy campground is in the long-range planning.

4. Board Information

Dan stated that DNR paddling guru and river trails expert, Nate Hoogeveen, has planned a canoe/kayak trip on the Little Sioux River on September 14th. He has invited legislative representatives and the Board of Supervisors. Dan will share the details with the board as soon as he gets them.

5. Other Business

Mark Monson reported that a local group, Para 911, got approval from the Board of Supervisors to investigate the old county home for paranormal activity. They are not being paid and will be required to sign a liability waiver.

Mark invited board members to attend a meeting with the SIMPCO water resources committee at the SIMPCO office at 9:00 a.m. on September 22nd. John Remus with the Corps of Engineers will be presenting via Zoom. The Corps dictates the policies on the river from Montana down to Mississippi, which also affects all the tributaries.

ITEM R6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chair, Aaron Gehling