



**WOODBURY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD  
2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

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**Woodbury County Conservation Board**  
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Board Members:  
Cindy Bennett  
Suzan Boden  
Don Dixon  
Mark Taylor, D.O.  
Christine Zellmer-Zant

Rick D. Schneider, Director  
Mark Peterson, Deputy Director  
Dawn Snyder, Education Director

## Executive Summary

**MISSION:** The mission of the Woodbury County Conservation Board is to provide high quality outdoor recreation and educational opportunities and to help people understand the value of natural resources in their lives.

### FY 15 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center – PCC paving of entrance road and parking lot, new entrance gate
- Little Sioux Park – Repaired and renovated Stub Gray Shooting Range
- Southwood Conservation Area – Repaired entrance road and trail system, initiated plan for cabins
- Brown's Lake/Bigelow Park – Remodeled Manager's residence
- Snyder Bend Park – Added water hydrants to every campsite

### CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

- Manage 16 areas totaling 5,543 acres
- Hold and monitor 15 conservation easements on 1,695 acres
- Park revenues totaled \$265,916
- Visitation to all areas was over 750,000 persons
- Over 52,000 visitors to Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center
- More than 430 volunteers logged nearly 2,700 hours
- Provided 147 public programs for more than 7,600 participants
- Staffed by 13 full time, 3 regular part time, and 25 seasonal employees

Woodbury County Conservation Board is a five-member volunteer board appointed by the county Board of Supervisors. Members are appointed for five-year terms. Meetings are scheduled the first Thursday of each month.

It has been our pleasure to carry out our mission and serve the public in this manner during the past fiscal year. The outstanding assistance and willing cooperation of so many local, state and federal agencies including the county Board of Supervisors and Secondary Roads Department, the Iowa Natural Resources Department, and numerous local organizations described in Section IV of this report is critical to the Conservation Department's continued success.

Woodbury County has a variety of outstanding natural resource and outdoor recreation opportunities supported by its taxpayers. Please go and explore your county park areas. I believe you will be pleasantly surprised.

Yours for Conservation,

Rick D. Schneider, Director

# WOODBURY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015

## I. BOARD ROSTER/MEETINGS

The conservation board members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors for five year terms. Members serving in 2014-2015 were as follows:

<u>Meetings Attended</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Expiration Date</u>
9	Don Dixon	President	December 31, 2017
11	Cindy Bennett	Vice President	December 31, 2018
10	Suzan Boden	Secretary	December 31, 2016
10	Mark Taylor	Member	December 31, 2019
11	Chris Zellmer-Zant	Member	December 31, 2015

Mark Taylor's term expired December 31, 2014 and he was reappointed to another five year term in December, 2014. Larry Clausen, Woodbury County Supervisor, attends meetings as a liaison to the Board from the Board of Supervisors.

The Board held eleven regular monthly meetings during the fiscal year. Minutes of these meetings are on file in the conservation office at Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center and are available for viewing on our website [www.woodburyparks.com](http://www.woodburyparks.com).

### OTHER MEETINGS ATTENDED

Woodbury County Conservation Board and staff hosted the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Iowa County Conservation Boards at Stoney Creek Inn Hotel and Conference Center on September 25-27, 2014. More than 200 persons were in attendance from over half the counties in Iowa. The department's law enforcement officers attended the County Conservation Peace Officers Association's annual law enforcement workshop on September 29-October 1, 2014 at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy in Johnston, Iowa. Five staff attended the annual Winterfest Employee Workshop in Waterloo on January 20-22, 2015. The Director attended the ISAC Fall School of Instruction in Des Moines on November 12-13, 2014. Staff members hosted a county conservation booth at the Woodbury County Fair in August 2014 and assisted with a district conservation booth at the Clay County Fair in September 2014. The Director attended the Spring Director's Retreat and REAP Day at the Capitol February 17-18, 2015.

Additional meetings attended by employees and/or board members during the fiscal year were as follows:

Loess Hills Prairie Seminar – May 29 - 31, 2015 in Monona County  
Western Regional CCPOA Law Enforcement Workshop  
Iowa Association of Naturalists Spring meeting  
Woodbury County training meetings  
Pesticide and Water Operator training meetings  
Woodbury County Conservation Foundation meetings  
Woodbury County Department Head meetings  
Grow Siouxland committee meetings  
Loess Hills Alliance committee meetings  
Western Iowa Tourism meetings  
IACCB District meetings  
National Wild Turkey Federation Chapter  
Pheasants Forever Chapter  
Staff meetings

The Conservation Board hosted a volunteer recognition and awards presentation reception on March 26, 2015 at Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. Numerous volunteers were recognized for their many hours of service to the Board and the Nature Center. Sheryl Banks of Westfield was presented the Conservation Educator Award for her many years of teaching and involving her students at the Nature Center. Gary Shaner of Sioux City was presented the Friend of Conservation Award for his numerous hours of volunteer service at the Nature Center.

## II. ADMINISTRATION/MAINTENANCE

### Staffing

Department staff during the fiscal year included thirteen full time, three regular part time and numerous seasonal employees. A part time Senior Aid position through the Woodbury County Community Action Agency continued to provide valuable receptionist assistance while providing employment for previously retired individuals. Numerous temporary seasonal employees were hired from April through October for maintenance tasks in the county park and wildlife areas.

The retirement of Resource Manager Bill Anderson resulted in a change of management at Snyder Bend Park and Bigelow Park. Josh VanVoorst, Resource Technician for both areas was promoted to Assistant Resource Manager for Bigelow Park on September 29, 2014. Dylan Bales was hired as the Resource Technician for both parks and began his duties March 2, 2015. Brian Stehr, Resource Manager at Snyder Bend Park was put in charge of both parks and the new positions he will supervise. This change will allow for better efficiency of staff and equipment for both parks as they will now be managed as a recreational complex. At least three more retirements are anticipated by the end of 2016. The Board has been working on succession planning to prepare for these anticipated changes.

The department's five Resource Managers and Deputy Director are certified law enforcement officers who maintain their certification through the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. These officers are also covered under the IPERS Protective Class of employees whereby the employer and employee both pay a higher rate into IPERS retirement system. Josh VanVoorst, Assistant Resource Manager at Bigelow Park, attended and completed the Basic Level II Training Academy at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo from March 9 – May 8, 2015.



**Officer VanVoorst**

Various employment programs provided through a variety of other agencies in the community help supplement board staffing needs when available. Conservation Corps Iowa, the AmeriCorps program through the Minnesota Conservation Corps, was contracted to work a total of 5 days in July 2014. Four naturalist interns were employed in 2014 and 2015 to assist with summer camps and programs at the nature center and parks and to assist with resource management projects. Interns from Briar Cliff University and Morningside College were used during the school year. An "Outdoor Skills" intern was hired in 2015 to teach and promote various outdoor skills to area youth. Funding for the position came from area businesses and conservation organizations. The Woodbury County Conservation Foundation provided funding for a Habitat intern to work on projects near the Nature Center, Riverside Bluffs, and other park areas. Board staff uses community service workers when available. Campground host volunteers provided a valuable service and were used in most of the parks at least part of the camping season. General volunteers are an important resource and have been a great assistance at the Nature Center and in the parks. The Nature Calls fund raiser event uses over 90 volunteers each year. The Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator position works to contact and organize volunteers. Staff continued to recruit and train volunteers to provide a wide variety of assistance with many tasks. Numerous groups including area businesses, Middle School Peer Helpers, high school students, college students, church groups, and Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops provided numerous volunteers that completed a variety of projects and tasks for the board during the year.

Positions employed hired throughout the fiscal year were as follows:

- (1) Director
- (1) Deputy Director – Field Operations
- (4) Resource Manager
- (2) Assistant Resource Manager
- (3) Resource Technician

- (1) Office Manager
- (12) Seasonal Park Ranger
- (1) Education Programs Director
- (1) Naturalist
- (1) Resource Naturalist
- (2) Nature Center Receptionist
- (1) Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator
- (8) Summer Intern Naturalist
- (6) Security Guard
- (9) Seasonal Park Maintenance Employee
- (2) Outdoor Skills IDNR Grant employee
- (2) Habitat Intern

The number of employees listed represents the various persons hired to fill these positions over a two season period. The numbers do not necessarily represent the number of authorized positions.

### Grants

The Conservation Department is very active in pursuing grant opportunities each year. Numerous grant applications were written and submitted by board staff during the fiscal year including the following:

<u>Grants Submitted</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>\$ Requested</u>	<u>\$ Awarded</u>	<u>Award Date</u>
Gilchrist Foundation	Boat Docks	\$ 34,940	\$ 0	July 2014
Kind World Foundation	Entrance Gate	\$ 7,525	\$ 7,525	August 2014
Wal-Mart Foundation	Recycling Containers	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	December 2014
Union Pacific Railroad	Nature Center Maintenance	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	February 2015
Iowa Ornithologist Union	Raptor Equipment	\$ 200	\$ 200	February 2015
Gilchrist Foundation	Cabin Development	\$ 100,000	\$ 0	July 2015
Wildlife Habitat Stamp	Land Acquisition	\$ 231,660	\$ 0	July 2015
Wildlife Habitat Stamp	Land Acquisition	\$ 43,892	\$ 0	July 2015
Iowa Chapter NWTf	Land Acquisition	\$ 25,000	\$ 0	July 2015
Whitetails Unlimited	Land Acquisition	\$ 5,000	\$ 0	2015-2016

Conservation staff continues to seek grant dollars and leverage available funds to assist with major development projects, land acquisition, publicity, and environmental education. **During FY15, a total of \$19,725 in grants was administered and another \$440,492 in grant applications was written and submitted for funding.**

### Long Range Planning

Long range strategic planning is a very important responsibility of the Board. A special strategic planning meeting was held by the Board as part of their regular meeting on May 6, 2015. Accomplishments included review of staff succession plans, review of the Salary/Wage Plan, discussion of Nature Center improvements, discussion of cabin development at Southwood Conservation Area and other park improvements, review of Board Policies and By-Laws, discussion of the five-year Capital Improvement Program, and review of the Long Range Land Acquisition Plan. Long range planning needs to be addressed every year to maintain focus and purpose by the Board and an efficient, effective and responsive department.

### Board Policies

Board policies are reviewed annually and are addressed when needs arise. The Conservation Board coordinates department policies closely with other county policies and procedures. The Board updated its Cell Phone, Residence, Uniform, Purchase Card and Endowment policies during the fiscal year. The cabin deposit requirement was removed and new cabin rental forms developed to streamline reservations. All new policies were developed and adopted for operation of the soon to be reopened Stub Gray Shooting Range. A new check servicing company, Creditor Advocates, was contracted to handle returned checks. A vehicle and equipment numbering/tracking system is ready for incorporation in the next fiscal year.

Camping coupon discount booklets were very popular and were reprinted after just one year, offering 10 nights of camping for the price of nine.

### Training

Training requirements for new and existing employees involves a large time commitment. A variety of training must be administered and received to ensure that employees are prepared to do their jobs. New full time and seasonal employees receive orientation training regarding board policies, especially safety related concerns. Training is important to ensure that employees are able to safely and efficiently do their jobs.

Staff attended numerous specialized training sessions during the fiscal year, many of which were required to maintain certifications. The Board's six Law Enforcement Officers attended various training and certification schools including the County Conservation Peace Officers Association's annual training school at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy in October 2014 to obtain required continuing education units and firearms qualification. Additional training was received at the Western Iowa Regional Workshop held in March 2015. Five employees attended the Winterfest Employees Training Workshop in Waterloo in January 2015. Training sessions on safety issues typically result in a review of Personal Protective Equipment and acquisition of items needed to keep employees safe. The annual County Safety Meeting for Secondary Roads and Conservation employees was held at the Nature Center on November 6, 2014.

Two staff attended a Midwest Wildfire Conference in Dubuque in February 2015. Staff and board members hosted and attended the Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards annual conference at Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center in Sioux City September 25-27, 2014. Eight staff members are required to maintain Pesticide Applicator Certification in several categories and attended several sessions during the year to obtain continuing education units for certification. The Director and Deputy Director attended classes to receive continuing education units for maintaining certification as Water System Distribution Operators for the Nature Center's public water supply system. All full time staff maintains CPR, AED and Basic First Aid certification.

### Committees/Appointments

The Deputy Director served as a member of the statewide review committee for competitive county conservation board REAP grants. The Education Programs Director served on the REAP Conservation Education Programs statewide grant review and scoring committee and as a delegate from Woodbury County to the Loess Hills Alliance Board of Directors. The Director served as an alternate from Woodbury County to the Loess Hills Alliance Board of Directors and as a member of the Stewardship Committee, Protection Committee and the Protection Committee's grant review group, and the Deputy Director served on the Stewardship Committee. The Director and Deputy Director served on the Habitat and Executive Committees for the Woodbury County Chapter of Pheasants Forever. The Director served as Publicity Chair for the local chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and served on the Woodbury County Health Insurance Committee. Bob Fundermann, Assistant Resource Manager, served as Chief Firearms Instructor for the County Conservation Peace Officers Association. Bernie Ketelsen, Resource Manager, served on the Woodbury County Safety Committee. Dawn Snyder and Board member Christine Zellmer-Zant served on the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation. All five Board members served on the Woodbury County Conservation Endowment Board. Two staff and Board member Mark Taylor serve on the Woodbury County REAP Committee.

### Agreements/Partnerships

The Board and staff continue to develop and nurture partnerships with numerous agencies and organizations for the benefit of conservation. Board staff worked with area school districts regarding incorporation of annual class field trips to the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. The Board's Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator and Resource Naturalist also worked with various agencies to provide after school programs for youth and public programs in the parks. Ducks Unlimited has been a major partner through agreements with the Board to develop and enhance Owego Wetland Complex and other areas in the county. The Loess Hills Alliance has provided partnership opportunities by making available through the Board fire fighting equipment to be used on private lands. The Alliance also provides continuing training for Advanced Wildland Burns whereby board staff receives refresher training. Trained individuals can be available to assist the National Park Service in fighting forest fires. An Agreement is maintained with Golden Hills Resource Conservation Development to provide for the installation and long-term maintenance of special

interpretive panel signs along the Loess Hills Scenic Byway. A major partnership effort has been formed between the Board and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in developing various agreements to manage the Owego Wetland Complex.

Siouxland District Health Department provides testing services for the nature center's public water supply as required by IDNR, and conducts annual water testing on all park wells. SDHD uses park sites to trap and monitor mosquitoes and diseases they may transmit. Staff maintains nesting towers for Ospreys on the north shore of Brown's Lake and along Snyder Bend in cooperation with Iowa DNR and CF Industries.

The Board continued to nurture partnerships and agreements with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation regarding conservation easements and Woodbury County Pheasants Forever in acquiring and providing food plot and native grass seed and seeding equipment. An extremely valuable partnership is maintained with the County Secondary Roads Department. Secondary Roads has provided countless hours of work with specialized heavy equipment, surveys, engineering and construction oversight on numerous conservation projects. A special Interdepartmental Agreement for maintaining specified park roads continued between the Conservation Board and Secondary Roads. In the past fiscal year, the Secondary Roads Department staff has worked on plans to improve the Dixon Bridge Access on the Little Sioux River.

The Board sponsored its annual Camping Kick-Off Weekend at all county campgrounds the first weekend in May which was well received. Campers received a voucher for one night free camping later in 2015 along with other small gifts. Board staff also works closely with Stone State Park staff on prairie and trail management around the nature center.

A more detailed description of various cooperative ventures is discussed in **Section IV** of this report.

#### Technology

Board staff continued to make considerable use of GIS technology for better management of county parks and wildlife areas, and use in various grant and permit applications. This technology is heavily used for prescribed burn management of wildlife areas and preparing detailed maps for grants or permit applications. Erik Lindsay, Resource Technician at Southwood Conservation Area, now serves as the department's GIS Specialist.

The Board's website, [www.woodburyparks.com](http://www.woodburyparks.com), provides a multitude of information for visitors and was completely revamped in the past year using a new system that will be easier to update by staff. Available cabin rental dates for the Board's camping cabins at Little Sioux Park and Snyder Bend Park can be accessed through the website. Video clips are available showing the inside of the cabins and enclosed shelters as well as the nature center. Donations and certain sales can also be made through the website. All four park offices are connected to the internet and the County's GroupWise email and main "U" Drive which provides an efficient method of information exchange with the main office. High speed internet access has been installed at all park offices, and wireless internet access for campers and park users at Snyder Bend Park and Bigelow Park. Public access at the Nature Center was also installed during the past year. It will be a goal of the Department to provide high speed wireless internet for park users in all four of the main developed park areas in the future.

The Board continued to provide three outlets for the public to obtain DNR licenses at Little Sioux Park, Southwood Conservation Area, and Brown's Lake. These outlets are part of the DNR's electronic licensing system that has been operating since 2000, and these systems were upgraded in 2010.

The Board is part of a statewide publicity and promotion effort for all county conservation boards through a website, [www.MyCountyParks.com](http://www.MyCountyParks.com). This advanced website provides excellent access for all county conservation boards in Iowa to promote their areas and facilities to potential visitors across the country and received comprehensive updates in 2015.

#### Environmental Education/Publicity

The Board's environmental education program continued to experience strong demand for programs and information during its twenty-sixth year. Emphasis for school class programs is centered on encouraging classes to visit the nature center and experience the outdoors in the loess hills. Students have the opportunity to view and learn from the exhibits, watch educational videos, listen to a naturalist program or

participate in an educational hike. Volunteers are an immense help with the many classes that come to the center. The nature center is an excellent facility to host various types of public programs regardless of weather conditions. Board naturalists and the Director conducted numerous radio and television interviews concerning various programs and events during the fiscal year. Numerous programs were presented to various groups and organizations in the community and at the county parks. The Board cooperated with the Woodbury County Soil Conservation District in providing trees to fifth graders in rural school districts throughout the county. The Board's newsletter, "Woodbury Wanderings", continued to be a popular publication and is published three times a year and is available on the website in digital format. The Board continued to sell advertising to help support printing costs of the newsletter which is a free publication. Subscribers are encouraged to sign up to receive the newsletter electronically. Several Resource Managers, the Deputy Director, and naturalists serve or assist as Hunter Safety and Fur Harvester Instructors teaching and assisting with these classes throughout the county during the year. Several classes are held at the nature center and various park offices. Hunter Safety classes are now part of the curriculum of the three local public high schools and are assisted by Board staff with over 200 students receiving the training in the past year. The nature center Gift Shop features many items which help promote the nature center with its name and logo. Summer day camps held at the nature center were again very successful, are self-sustaining, and continue to be expanded where possible. A complete annual report of the Board's environmental education program is located at the end of this report in **Section VII**.

The Board provided an information booth at the Woodbury County Fair. Staff also assisted with a District III County Conservation booth at the Clay County Fair in September 2014.

A dedicated, hard working group of volunteers worked with the Education Programs Director and Naturalist to raise money for nature center programs and needs through the eleventh annual "Nature Calls" fund raiser. Over \$45,000 was raised at the September 27, 2014 event which was held at the Sioux City Convention Center at the conclusion of the statewide County Conservation Boards annual conference. Proceeds help fund one summer naturalist intern and upgrades/improvements to the Nature Center.

#### Communication

Communication contacts between various conservation organizations and the Board were coordinated by the Director during the fiscal year. Maintaining close working relationships with various state, county, and federal organizations along with local organizations is a high priority. Staff continually seeks new methods to communicate through the Board's website and other electronic means.

Regular staff meetings were conducted during the fiscal year. Communication efforts among staff locations have been enhanced with the use of e-mail, high-speed internet, fax machines, and cell phones. Conservation staff conducted regular maintenance checks on major equipment, playground equipment, park facilities and vehicles during the year. Emphasis is placed on safety issues in all park areas according to the Board's safety policy. Routine safety inspections of park shops help ensure a safe working environment for employees and compliance with OSHA regulations.

#### Equipment Purchases

Major equipment/furniture items purchased by the Board during the fiscal year were as follows:

	<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
2	Toro Groundsmaster 328D Mowers	\$ 31,602
1	2016 Ford ¾ T. Pickup Truck	\$ 18,873
1	2015 Chevrolet ¾ T. Pickup Truck	\$ 18,302
1	Bobcat 3650 UTV	\$ 19,337
1	Bobcat Broom Attachment	\$ 3,218

A complete equipment inventory is on file in the conservation office.

### III. FUTURE

#### CIP/Revenue Requirements

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the Conservation Department is reviewed regularly by the Conservation Board. A minimum five year improvement program is prioritized, approved annually and submitted to the Board of Supervisors as part of the annual budgeting process. The CIP is based on needs and available grants and revenues, and can fluctuate throughout the year. In **Section VI**, this report describes various capital improvement projects scheduled for completion during the next fiscal year. These include improvement upgrades to the Little Sioux Park swim beach, nature center improvements, cabin development at Southwood Conservation Area, replacing playground surfacing material, and numerous other projects. Longer range projects include construction of a picnic shelter at Southwood Conservation Area, renovating the shelter at Fowler Forest Preserve, renovating the Bellamy Campground at Little Sioux Park, and constructing an accessible fishing jetty at Brown's Lake. All projects are dependent on park user fees and other revenues generated from conservation areas that are deposited into the Conservation Reserve Fund which finances these improvements. These revenues are also used as leverage to cost-share with available grant programs which provide additional funding for capital improvement projects.

Large scale projects could not be completed without the availability of various grant monies. Applications to grant programs such as LAWCON and REAP as well as project specific grants will be made when appropriate provided grant monies and match dollars continue to be available. Many state and federal grant sources are shrinking or disappearing completely. Construction costs continue to rise at a steady pace making it imperative that grant funds be obtained to complete necessary capital improvements. The Board and staff need to continue to look for new sources of revenue, and the county Board of Supervisors needs to be involved in this effort. User fees and other charges will continue to be monitored to insure a competitive product and price, but these revenues will need to be supplemented with additional sources. Long range planning must be an on-going effort by the Conservation Board and staff and should include the Board of Supervisors in dealing with this problem. The Board has collaborated in the past with the Board of Supervisors to issue bonds to finance specific projects with park revenues used to pay back the bonds. This is an innovative way to complete high cost improvements when interest rates are attractive for borrowing. The Iowa Outdoor Natural Resources Trust Fund can be a significant source of revenue when it is funded.

#### Land Acquisition

Land acquisition efforts will concentrate on the Curtin Timber Expansion. Easement opportunities will be monitored for any attractive possibilities. During the fiscal year, 18.22 acres were acquired from Fred Briese and added to Little Sioux Park for the protection of the Little Sioux River bottomland habitat. The Board was approached in March 2015 by a landowner adjacent to Curtin Timber regarding their desire to sell 120 acres to the Board. Negotiations were worked on during the summer with assistance from Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Grant applications to the DNR Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund were submitted for the Briese and Curtin Timber Expansion projects with results coming in July 2015. Both these projects meet the main criteria for acquisitions since they are adjacent to existing areas.

Rare opportunities for fee title acquisition occasionally arise from willing sellers and the Board should take advantage of these offers coupled with the availability of grant dollars to fund acquisitions. The Board will continue to work only with willing sellers, and potential acquisitions will be reviewed to determine their viability within the Board's system and Long Range Land Acquisition Plan. Acquisitions are usually dependent upon grants which typically fund 50% -100% of acquisition costs.

#### Cooperation

As described in **Section IV**, the Board will continue to cooperate wherever possible with other agencies, departments, and private organizations to further the awareness of conservation and promote the Board's goals and objectives throughout the next fiscal year. Cooperative efforts and partnerships are critical to the success of the Conservation Board. Locally, the Board looks forward to continuing cooperation with Western Iowa Tech, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, River City Anglers Club, and Siouxland Fly Fishing Club. The Board will also continue to work with the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation, Loess Hills Audubon, the Northwest Iowa Sierra Club, Stone State Park and IDNR, The Nature Conservancy and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to promote conservation issues and projects. Collaborative efforts will continue with the Loess Hills Alliance to promote conservation and

protection measures for Iowa's loess hills. The Board also looks forward to continued use of various grant programs including employment programs such as Conservation Corps Iowa and Woodbury County Community Action Agency Senior Aides program, and community service worker programs, along with interns and volunteers to complete various maintenance and educational projects throughout the Board's conservation system.

A critically important cooperative relationship exists between the Conservation Department and other county departments, particularly Secondary Roads. Many projects could not get accomplished or could cost much more without the willing cooperation of the County Engineer and his staff who assist often with a variety of maintenance and construction projects in the parks due to their specialized equipment and expertise. It is imperative that these types of relationships continue among departments.

#### Priorities/Strategic Planning

The Board's top priorities for the next fiscal year will be development of cabins at Southwood Conservation Area, renovation of the beach at Little Sioux Park, and installing drainage improvements at the Bigelow Park campground. The Board's policies and long range plans will continue to be reviewed and updated as necessary. Future planning efforts assist in developing the Board's budget requests, and a strategic planning meeting of the Board needs to be held annually. Board priorities continually change, but timely review of these priorities will allow needs to be efficiently matched with limited resources. Strategic planning has already proven its value within the department.

#### Staff

Full time conservation staff numbers have been insufficient for many years. Optimally, the department should have a minimum of four additional full time positions to operate most efficiently and responsively to the public. Discussion of additional staff has been addressed through strategic planning and communication with the Board of Supervisors with overall county budget concerns the limiting factor. Priorities for full time staff positions include a Natural Resources Coordinator, two additional Resource Technician positions, and a third naturalist for the department. The "park season" runs nearly eight months which causes difficulties with federal wage and hour regulation compliance when using temporary or seasonal employees. Increasing visitation numbers at county parks and the Nature Center has put tremendous pressure on existing employees to keep up with public needs. Increasing training requirements take more hours away from department production thereby placing even more pressure on limited manpower resources. New staff positions should be considered which can better accommodate and benefit the Board's programs and service to the public. Additional employee retirements within the next two years will also impact staff needs. Position requests have been favorably received by the Board of Supervisors, but budget constraints have not allowed new positions to be added at the present time. It is hoped that proposed strategic planning for the entire county will place more emphasis on staffing needs to provide necessary services.

Board staff will continue to recruit, train and organize volunteers that can assist with operating and maintaining the nature center and park facilities. Campground hosts have proven to be particularly effective, and staff will continue to seek individuals willing to serve in that capacity. The Board will continue to annually recognize special individuals who have made outstanding contributions of their time and efforts to apply conservation practices and promote conservation education by conferring the "Friend of Conservation" and "Conservation Educator" awards. The volunteer recognition program will continue to reward and acknowledge those dedicated volunteers that assist the Board in various ways. The Board's outstanding environmental education program will continue to be the top promotional tool for the Board's park and conservation areas and programs.

## **IV. COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

### **1. Management Agreements**

The Woodbury County Conservation Board presently operates two areas totaling 46 acres under management agreement with the Iowa Department of Natural resources. These areas include Bigelow Park and the office/nature center area at Stone Park. The Board also operates one area under management agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation which is the Copeland Park Access on the Little Sioux River west of Correctionville at the State Highway #31 bridge. The Bigelow Park management agreement was renewed as a 50 year management lease agreement in 2010. The Board may consider negotiating with Iowa DOT for another river access site on the

Little Sioux River near the D-50 bridge south of Anthon. This would result in another management agreement and provide an excellent public access on the river.

2. Wildlife Habitat Restoration Program

The Board maintains an active wildlife habitat restoration program by planting tree and shrub seedlings and various types of grass cover and food plots on its park lands each year. Last year, 82.14 pounds of prairie and forb seed were planted on 9.7 acres of public land and 16.68 pounds of cool season seed were planted on 1.39 acres. Wildlife food plots totaling 86.2 acres were planted on public wildlife areas. Controlled burns for prairie for grassland improvement as well as seed production were conducted on 150.77 acres. Staff cooperated with the Woodbury County Pheasants Forever Chapter in providing free seed for establishing food plots on public and private lands.

The Board's undeveloped wildlife areas are managed specifically for wildlife populations. Food plots and farmlands are managed to benefit wildlife. Some lands are enrolled in USDA programs, including eight CRP contracts and six WRP contracts which the Board must maintain.

The restoration and establishment of native prairie and forbs is a popular component of the board's habitat program. The board maintains four Truax native grass drills of various sizes required to plant native grass seed, and the board's equipment and technical assistance is constantly in demand. Ranging from the small 6' drill, which is ideal for small plantings, to the large 12' no till drill which is suitable for large acre planting, the drills are made available to landowners on a rental basis and were used to plant hundreds of acres in the fall of 2014 and the spring of 2015. Depending on time and weather, staff typically harvests native grass seed each fall for use in replanting both public and private areas as well as providing a seed source for roadside vegetation management programs. No seed was harvested during fall 2014. The Board assists the Secondary Roads Department with seeding various road shouldering, regrading and box culvert construction projects throughout the county. Native grass species are used when practical.

Non-game habitat improvement programs include maintenance of bluebird house trails at Southwood Conservation Area and Little Sioux Park. Volunteers also maintain bluebird house trails along one mile of fence line at the Interstate rest area south of Sergeant Bluff, and the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. Osprey nesting towers were erected on the north shore of Brown's Lake and east shore of Snyder Bend Lake in November 2013. Other non-game efforts include a variety of programs offered to the public. Board staff assists the local Ducks Unlimited chapter at the annual Green Wing Day for youth and assist with construction of woodduck houses for use throughout the county. These houses are installed at various sites by department staff and monitored occasionally to determine usage and condition. Representatives from the Waterfowl Association of Iowa have assisted with installing nesting structures at Owego Wetland Complex.

Special planting equipment for planting seedling trees and shrubs is made available to landowners on a donation basis. Employees work closely with landowners and Iowa DNR personnel surveying and establishing populations of wildlife species as well as enforcing fish and game regulations.

3. Water Recreation Access Cost-Share

This state cost-share program typically provides up to seventy-five percent of the cost for boat ramps, docks, and related facilities used by boaters and fishermen. The Conservation Board has obtained several boat ramp and dock facilities through this program, as well as assistance for parking lot improvements and restroom facilities. A limited amount of funds are made available to conservation boards each year for various cost-share projects. Monies in this fund are derived from a special tax on fuel sold within the state. In January 2013, Board staff submitted a grant application for cost share funding on the proposed boat ramp project on the Little Sioux River at Little Sioux Park and was successful in receiving up to \$52,000 toward that project. Construction began in November 2013 and the project was completed in April 2014. Plans call for submitting a grant application for new boat dock facilities at several parks next fiscal year.

4. Supplemental Environment Projects (SEP)

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division has established a process whereby monies paid as penalties in environmental enforcement cases can be directed to supplemental environmental projects, or SEPs. Instead of fines and penalties being paid into the state's general fund, the process allows for the penalties to be directed to the county conservation board in the county where the violation occurred for the board to expend on environmentally beneficial projects. An annual report is sent to IDNR to verify the amount of monies collected during the fiscal year and explain how they were expended by the county. Monies are placed in a special SEP fund and budgeted for expenditure through that fund. During the fiscal year, no environmental penalties or fund interest were received by the Conservation Board, and the fund contains a zero balance. The Conservation Board has designated Owego Wetland Complex as their main priority for expenditure of any SEP funds.

5. Naturalist Programs

The Board's environmental education program completed its twenty-sixth full year in June 2015. Please refer to **Section VII - Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center Annual Report**. Although most programs and presentations are organized by the naturalists, the Director and other staff assist in presenting programs to various groups and organizations throughout the year. Staff members occasionally participate in various publicity efforts with the media. Resource Managers are frequently requested to present programs to school classes as well as information on specific topics about their areas and careers.

6. Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts

Scouting programs in the area continue to use county conservation parks for camping and other activities. The naturalists and Resource Naturalist occasionally work with Eagle Scout candidates and Girl Scout Gold Award candidates on their community service projects. Several Eagle Scout projects were planned and completed for the nature center and some county parks during the last fiscal year. Staff will continue to work with scout groups to foster an interest in conservation ethics and careers, and to provide opportunities for smaller service projects.

7. Woodbury County Pheasants Forever

This local private organization was formed in January 1986. The group is dedicated to improving habitat to increase the number of pheasants within the county, and works with landowners and other conservation agencies to meet their goals. Since 1987, the local chapter has assisted financially in the purchase of 852 acres of additional wildlife habitat areas in the county. In two acquisitions, the local chapter was responsible for nearly 25% of the total acquisition costs.

The Chapter hosted a Youth Day in conjunction with Whitetails Unlimited at Little Sioux Park October 2014 with 85 youth in attendance, and a Youth Fishing Derby in June 2015. In the spring of 2015, the Pheasants Forever (PF) Chapter and conservation staff cooperated in providing 300 pounds of free seed for establishment of food plots on public and private lands. Board staff assisted the Chapter by providing equipment and planting advice when possible to private landowners along with equipment for prescribed burns. The Board plans to continue cooperative efforts with the Pheasants Forever Chapter for the establishment of additional permanent habitat and food plots on private lands.

8. River City Anglers Club

The River City Anglers Club is a local organization comprised of persons interested in the betterment of fishing resources in the local and Midwest area. The group holds an annual event featuring fishing experts and a swap meet to raise monies that can be used for special projects benefiting fish resources and fishermen. The club has donated several thousand dollars to the Board for the improvement of fishing facilities and opportunities at Brown's Lake and Snyder Bend, and sponsored the 400 gallon aquarium display at the nature center.

9. Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is an IRS 501(c) (3) organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of natural resources in Iowa. This group can provide specialized assistance to landowners in the acquisition and protection of various types of land. The Conservation Board utilized the assistance of the Heritage Foundation in acquiring an addition to Shagbark Hills in 1987, the Hammond addition to Southwood Conservation Area in 1989, three additions to Oak Ridge in 1999, 2000 and 2006, two additions to Owego Wetland Complex in 2001, and negotiation of permanent conservation easements. The advantages of the foundation include quicker response to seller's requests and demands, and the ability to provide specialized tax deductible options to willing sellers that cannot be provided by governmental entities. The Foundation provides their services at cost, and the Conservation Board maintains a sustaining membership with this organization.

The Board holds fifteen easements on over 1,695 acres and is responsible for annual monitoring of these easements.

10. Woodbury County Conservation Foundation

The Woodbury County Conservation Foundation was formed in January 1990. It is an incorporated non-profit organization that received tax exempt status in 1991, and is dedicated to the conservation and preservation of natural resources in Woodbury County. Similar in goals to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation concentrates on specific projects to assist the Conservation Board in completing major acquisition and construction projects. The foundation's main goals have been the acquisition and protection of native loess hill prairie areas and the establishment of a regional nature center for the conservation board. The foundation's most ambitious project, establishment of a nature center, was realized in 1995. The foundation's tax exempt status is an invaluable help in raising funds for various projects such as the nature center, and will continue to be a vehicle for future fundraising efforts. The foundation has positions for nine directors, two seats which are reserved for a county conservation board member and staff member. Dawn Snyder, Education Programs Director and conservation board member Christine Zellmer-Zant served as representatives on the foundation board of directors. Dawn also serves as Secretary/Treasurer for the Foundation. Regular meetings are held by the foundation, and its mailing address continues to be the Conservation Board office mailing address. As a 501(c) (3) organization, the foundation provides a tax-deductible avenue for donations, contributions and grants to be used toward conservation projects including the nature center, land acquisition, and parks.

During the fiscal year, a special group of nearly 90 volunteers worked on the Board's annual fundraising "Nature Calls" event, a micro brew tasting and auction event held each fall. The eleventh annual event was held September 27, 2014 and netted over \$28,000 for improvements at the Nature Center. The Foundation provided funding for a Habitat Intern in 2015 to work on prairies and other habitats. They also provided funding for a Conservation Corps Iowa crew of six workers to conduct five days of tree and brush clearing as part of prairie restoration efforts at Riverside Bluffs. The Foundation continued to offer special incentives to boost memberships, including camping discounts, free nights of camping and nature center gift shop discounts. On February 15, 2015 the Foundation held its annual meeting at the nature center and featured a program on butterfly pollinators. The Foundation has continued to fund scholarships for needy Summer Camp children.

11. REAP

The Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection Act (REAP) was passed by the 1989 session of the Iowa General Assembly and went into effect July 1, 1989. This legislation was to be a long-term, multi-million dollar commitment to the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of natural and scenic areas; county and state parks; upgrading environmental education programs; protection of endangered animal and plant species and wildlife habitat; halting soil erosion; and improving air and water quality. The program will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in FY 15.

For the 2015 fiscal year, \$16 million was appropriated by the Iowa legislature which was allocated among eight different areas, including conservation boards, which will share 20% of the appropriation. Of this 20%, sixty percent goes directly to county boards on per county and per capita basis. The remaining 40% is administered through the Natural Resources Commission for competitive grants to conservation boards. To be eligible for the per capita share and competitive grants, counties must spend at least 22 cents per thousand dollars of taxable valuation on conservation programs. During the 2015 fiscal year, Woodbury County spent approximately 42.7 cents per thousand dollars of taxable valuation on conservation programs. During the fiscal year, Woodbury County received \$9,653 for its per county share and \$31,778 for its per capita share. Also credited to the REAP account was \$444.66 in interest.

During the fiscal year, a transfer of funds for expenditures in the amount of \$38,417 was made from the REAP account for a portion of the Nature Center paving project costs.

Carryovers in the REAP Fund are typically obligated for future facility developments or specialized equipment. A portion of the funds may be used for cost-sharing land acquisition and capital improvement grant projects if necessary. For FY 15, the Legislature retained the REAP appropriation at \$16 million. The Board is hopeful that REAP funding may soon reach the originally legislated \$20 million per year level. Since REAP funds are used for special projects and expenditures, the board is not dependent on this special appropriation for operational expenditures. It is anticipated that Woodbury County's REAP funds in the next fiscal year will be used to assist with Southwood cabin development or land acquisition.

12. National Wild Turkey Federation

A local chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation known as Loess Hills Longbeards was formed in January 2000. The chapter conducts an annual membership and fundraising banquet. Chapter meetings are held at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, and the Director served as publicity chairman during the fiscal year. This group is dedicated to the preservation and establishment of the wild turkey throughout the United States. Most funds raised by chapters are forwarded to a state and national organization and used for a variety of programs to acquire and enhance habitat and promote the wild turkey. The Conservation Board received a \$7,500 grant in 1999 to assist with an addition to Oak Ridge Conservation Area. Two grants totaling \$17,000 were received in July 2005 and January 2006 to assist with a 228-acre acquisition project in Oak Ridge Conservation Area. A grant for \$10,000 to assist with a 320-acre acquisition project in Oak Ridge was received in January 2008. Staff will continue to work with this organization to promote their efforts in enhancing wildlife habitat and populations in the county.

V. LAND ACQUISITION

One fee title acquisition was accomplished during the fiscal year. A total of 18.122 acres of river bottom forest was acquired from Fred Briese in May 2015 at the appraised value of \$57,990.40. The property adjoins the Union Bridge Trail and enlarges Little Sioux Park as it protects additional habitat along the Little Sioux River. A second acquisition project was pursued to expand Curtin Timber and will be continued in the next fiscal year. The Board was approached by a neighbor adjacent to Unit 4 of Oak Ridge Conservation Area requesting the Board consider selling part of this public property. The Board's policy and position is to acquire specific properties for public use and not sell. The Board was also approached about a potential donation of a small parcel within the limits of Sioux City.

Easements, river accesses, and expansion of Snyder Bend Park will be priorities in the future. Future acquisitions will continue to be dependent upon available grants and the Board's ability to maintain areas. Acquisitions must fit into the Board's plans with priority being placed on Oak Ridge Conservation Area, Owego Wetland Complex, and existing parks. Land is acquired only from willing sellers.

At the end of the fiscal year, the conservation board managed 16 different areas comprising approximately 5,543 acres, and held fifteen easements on over 1,695 acres.

## VI. AREA DEVELOPMENT

### 1. Snyder Bend County Park

Snyder Bend County Park is located two miles southwest of the Salix interchange on Interstate 29. This 35-acre area was acquired in 1961, and is currently managed as a full service outdoor recreation park area. Existing facilities at this site include modern and tent camping areas, a camper's shower and restroom facility, playground equipment and open play areas, picnicking grounds, an open shelterhouse, restroom building, boat ramp and parking lot, paved access and interior roads, concrete trail, four modern family cabins, a residence, and maintenance shop/office and storage area.

Installation of water hydrants for all campsites was completed in August 2014. The park office, break room and restroom floors were refinished with an epoxy coating. The office received new desks and furniture. Additional trees were planted in spring 2015 as staff continued to replace trees lost in the 2011 flood. The small prairie area south of the cabins was burned to assist with rejuvenation. Staff continued to receive inquiries concerning extended cabin rentals from nearby construction workers, but none were arranged. The Board has declared that only one cabin of the four would be made available for extended stays.

Plans for the next year include continuation of planting trees. The original open shelter needs some refurbishing and the playground surfacing material needs to be replaced with shredded rubber. The drain field for the water treatment system needs replaced due to failure from the 2011 flood effects. Other future plans include development of an accessible fishing pier jetty near the lake and application of epoxy finish to the camper shower/restroom building floors.

Visitation to the park was very strong in 2014-2015 with an estimated 165,000 visitors during the fiscal year.

### 2. Bigelow Park - Brown's Lake

Bigelow Park is located on the south shore of Brown's Lake one mile west of the Salix interchange on Interstate 29. This 36-acre state-owned area, which also contains the Dale G. Bell Memorial Arboretum, was acquired from the Department of Natural Resources through management agreement in October 1970. It was renewed in 2002, and again in 2010 for a 50-year lease period. The area is highly developed and is managed as a high-use outdoor recreation park. Facilities at this park include a 41 unit modern camping area, a tent camping area, a camper's shower and restroom building, enclosed shelterhouse with restrooms, playground equipment and open play areas, swimming beach area, concession/restroom building, boat ramp and dock facilities, parking lots, maintenance shed/office and storage area, paved roads, and a residence.

Additional trees were planted throughout the park with assistance of volunteers from CF Industries and their families. The Manager's residence was completely remodeled. The small prairie area near the shop was burned as part of the management practices. Woodbury REC brought electric power to the boat dock area and installed new LED night security lights.

Weekly water quality monitoring was conducted at the swimming beach during the summer months in cooperation with IDNR. Dust control agent was applied to the portion of gravel road near the boat ramp.

Plans for next year include continued tree planting and playground renovation including new surfacing material. Long range improvements include a major renovation or replacement of the beach and concession building, constructing an accessible fishing jetty near the picnic area, installation of new boat docks, repair of asphalt roads, and clearing more shoreline areas for fishing access.

This popular area experienced strong visitation numbers and a resurgence in camping during the fiscal year with an estimated 185,000 visitors during the fiscal year.

### 3. Little Sioux Park

This 609-acre developed park area is located two miles southwest of Correctionville off State Highway #31. The bulk of this park area was acquired in 1965, with 118 acres of abandoned county owned gravel pits on the north and 40 acres adjacent to the south added to the park jurisdiction in 1999. Fourteen acres were added in 2004 to provide a trail connector to the town of Correctionville. Thirty-two acres encompassing an old gravel pit adjacent to the shooting range was added in 2008. Eighteen acres of river bottom greenbelt were added in 2015. The park also includes an area formerly known as the Little Sioux Greenbelt, 25 acres of river bottom timber located on the east side of the river and acquired in 1974. Little Sioux Park is currently managed as a high-use outdoor recreation and conservation park. Facilities existing at the park include two modern campground areas with shower and restroom facilities, camping cabins, picnicking grounds, playground equipment and open play areas, enclosed shelterhouse, several small open shelters, three modern restrooms, swimming beach area, shooting range, hiking trails, hard surfaced trail, non-modern campground, a ten acre lake, historic one-room schoolhouse, maintenance shop/office and storage area, paved roads, and a residence.

The main project for the year centered on the Stub Gray Shooting Range which closed in May 2014 due to vandalism and safety concerns. All improvements



Shooting Range Bullet Catch Backstops

were the result of three public meetings held in the summer of 2014 to gather support and input for changes that would keep the range open in the future. Work began in October 2014 to completely renovate the range with new improvements and safety features added. New bullet catch backstops were installed; new target holders and frames installed; noise abatement features incorporated; parking lot renovated; chain link fence and registration kiosk installed; and new signage to accompany new regulations including a user fee system were put in place.

An accessible campsite was developed in the Riverside Campground in 2014. Water quality monitoring on the swimming beach was conducted weekly during the summer months in cooperation with the IDNR. Removal of dead and dying Scotch pine trees continued with the wood used for camper firewood. Stumps were removed and numerous new trees planted, staked and mulched. A prescribed burn was conducted on a native prairie area along the Union Bridge Trail, with a total of 68.8 acres of prairie burned. Numerous special events were held at the park including a Youth Day sponsored by the local Pheasants Forever Chapter in October, a Youth Fishing Derby sponsored by Pheasants Forever in June, and the Halloween Camping Weekend.

Plans for next year include renovation of the swim beach area and Bellamy Campground, and continued tree removal and replacement. Longer range plans include addition of playground equipment near the beach, replacement of playground surfacing material, application of epoxy floors to various restroom/shower facilities, asphalt road repairs, and development of the Peters Pit area.



Shooting Range Kiosk



Accessible Campsite – Riverside Campground



Little Sioux Park generated the largest amount of revenue during 2014-2015 and continued to be extremely busy. New and renovated facilities continue to attract more users, and the new trail continues to be extremely popular with park users and Correctionville citizens. It is estimated that the park hosted approximately 300,000 persons during the fiscal year.

4. Fowler Forest Preserve

This attractive day-use area is located one-half mile west of Smithland on State Highway #141. The original 50-acre site was acquired in May 1965, with an additional 58 acres added to the area in 1981. In 1998, 52 acres located between the preserve and the city limits of Smithland was added to the area which now totals 160 acres. This park is managed primarily as a day-use preserve and includes an open picnic shelter, restroom facilities, hiking trails, parking lot, and playground equipment.

This area continued to be a popular picnicking and rest area stop for persons traveling along Highway 141. Future plans include continued replacement of steep trail sections with railroad tie box steps, renovation or replacement of the large open shelter, and replacement of playground surfacing material. Attendance for the fiscal year is estimated at 15,000 people.

5. Southwood Conservation Area

This mostly undeveloped conservation area is located one mile south and three fourths mile west of Smithland. A majority of the area, 463 acres, was acquired from 1978-80 with fifty percent cost sharing funds received through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Another 160 acres was acquired in 1989 with cost sharing from the state Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund and donations from local Pheasants Forever Chapters. The entire park now totals 623 acres. The area provides a limited amount of development along the east boundary of the property and is managed primarily as a wildlife conservation park. Facilities on this site include primitive and tent camping areas, a nineteen site modern electrical campground, hiking and bridle trails, two 7-acre lakes, boat launching area and dock, modern restroom and shower building, maintenance shop/office and storage area, and a residence.

The main projects during the fiscal year consisted of major maintenance items. The newly graded entrance road experienced severe erosion from heavy rains in 2014 and had considerable earth work completed for repair. Much work was done on the park trail system with erosion problems corrected and granular surfacing added. Dust control agent was applied to the gravel road along the camping areas.

A donation was received for the addition of swings to the playground and will be installed in late 2015. Planning began for development of camping cabins at the park with a site survey. Native grass seed harvest operations were headquartered at Southwood Conservation Area where seed is cleaned, dried and stored. Controlled burns were conducted on 36.25 acres of grasslands to encourage prairie growth and deter invasive woody vegetation.

Plans for next year include continued work on cabin development depending on grant funding. The playground will also be expanded with swings and another feature. Future plans include extending electrical service to a number of tent campsites, continued renovation of trails, replacement of fishing docks, and application of epoxy finish to the restroom/shower floor. Southwood Conservation Area is a popular destination for people who enjoy large, undeveloped open spaces, but still have access to basic amenities. It is also a popular spot for equestrian users, hunters and campers. It is estimated that at least 40,000 people visited this conservation area during the fiscal year.

6. Shagbark Hills

This undeveloped 379-acre natural area is located one and one-quarter miles south of Correctionville on County Road L-27. The area is managed as a public hunting area and is regularly used by hunters, hikers and birdwatchers.

This area is open for public hunting and provides good opportunities for a large variety of upland game species. Controlled burns were conducted on 17.54 acres of grassland.

7. Midway Park

This 20-acre abandoned gravel pit site is located three and one-half miles north of Merville on State Highway #140. It contains old gravel pit ponds, a vault latrine restroom, rock ramp accesses to the ponds and picnic facilities. The area was acquired in May 1978 from the Midway Park Association of Kingsley, Pierson, Merville and Lawton. The park has been developed into a picnic area and is managed for this purpose. The gravel pit ponds also provide good fishing for many park users.

8. Copeland Park Access

In January 1986, the Board obtained a right-of-way lease for a .36 acre access from the Iowa Department of Transportation located one-half mile west of Correctionville. This site will be maintained as an undeveloped river access.

9. Inkpaduta River Access

In February 1989, the Board obtained a two acre river access by easement through a trade-off agreement involving the closing of an abandoned secondary road right-of-way and establishment of a new right-of-way to the river. The area provides a parking lot and limited access to the Little Sioux River for fishermen and canoeists. Long range plans include installing a graded and rocked canoe ramp access.

10. Inkpaduta Historical Monument

In April 1989, the Board acquired .04 acres adjacent to the county road right-of-way and State Highway #31 for a historical marker site. This area marks the location of the Sioux Indian Inkpaduta's campsite during the winter of 1856-57 where they stayed before being driven away by the white settlers. A large boulder with an 18" X 24" bronze informational plaque was erected on this site in the fall of 1989. This site preserves a small part of county history, and attracts many interested travelers as they pass on the adjacent highway.

11. Walling Access

This 13.04-acre river access on the Little Sioux River near Correctionville was purchased in 1989. The area is managed for wildlife and as an access for canoeists and fishermen to the Little Sioux River. Flooding in early 2014 caused erosion damage to the new concrete boat ramp facility. The ramp was extended and additional rip rap added for protection in July 2014.

12. Oak Ridge Conservation Area

This large, undeveloped conservation area identified by the board in 1990 will be the Board's largest acquisition project when completed in the future totaling approximately 3,200 acres. The largest parcel containing 530 acres was added in 2000, and connected three separate existing parcels. Another 19 acres were added in 2002, 231 acres in 2005, and 315 acres in 2007. The area is located between Oto and Smithland, and presently consists of four separate Units totaling 2,082 acres.



Timber stand improvement work covering 10.4 acres was completed in Unit 2 with the assistance of a Conservation Corps Iowa crew who worked five days on the effort. The project is partially funded with a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

grant through the NRCS and will average 11 acres per year through 2016. Prescribed burns were conducted on 28.18 acres.



Future plans include removal of remaining interior fences and continuation of timber stand improvement work that will enhance prairie and timber resources. Existing native prairie areas as well as wooded areas will be rejuvenated through controlled burns. Additional parcels within the identified boundaries of the Oak Ridge Area will be acquired from willing sellers as they become available and as grant monies are available to fund such purchases.

13. Owego Wetland Complex

This 1,330-acre area is located in the Missouri River bottoms adjacent to an abandoned town known as Owego. The original 320-acre parcel was purchased in 1999. Following the purchase of a permanent wetland easement by the federal government, the Conservation Board acquired residual rights and subsequent title to other parcels comprising the complex. Basic wetland restoration work was funded with federal Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) monies.

No prescribed burns were conducted in 2015 due to unfavorable conditions. Wet weather in 2014 and into 2015 created sufficient water levels so no supplemental pumping was required. A youth duck hunt was held in October 2014 sponsored by the local conservation officer.



The Owego Wetland Complex provided good hunting opportunities in the fall of 2014 and spring 2015. A current management plan needs to be written in cooperation with NRCS for this area. The future continues to look bright for the impact this complex will have on wildlife populations as well as outdoor recreation opportunities for hunters and bird watchers.

14. Administrative Offices/Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center

The Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center is located on approximately 10 acres of land in the southwest corner of Stone State Park. The area is under management agreement with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The nature center, completed in 1995 features a large exhibit hall, classrooms, library/resource room, gift shop, and conservation board offices. Additional features include a paved access road and parking lot, maintenance shop and a 2.5-mile hiking trail system with outdoor amphitheater.

The main improvement to this facility was the new concrete paving of the access road and parking lot completed in August and September 2014. Rainy weather caused many delays in the work, but all was completed in time to host the statewide annual conference of county conservation boards. The Nature Center had to remain closed for six weeks during the construction, but other contractors were able to complete interior drywall repairs. Through the generosity of a grant from the Kind World Foundation, a new electric entrance gate was installed. The paving project also provided a paved parking lot off of Highway 12 for after-hours visitors with the new gate placed just past the parking area. Night security lights along the entrance road and illuminating the area sign were replaced with LED fixtures. New signs were installed and the main facility sign was refurbished. Public Wi-Fi access was installed at the facility through the Verizon network.

Nature Calls 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary fund raising event for the nature center was held at the Sioux City Convention Center September 27, 2014 and was a huge success. Held in conjunction with the statewide county conservation boards conference, many conference attendees took advantage to attend this event to find out how to put on such a large fund raiser. This annual event raises over \$25,000 each year for major projects at the center.

Future projects at this facility include conversion to all LED light fixtures in conjunction with the county-wide effort, renovation of one of the scenic overlook decks, repainting the shop, trail development, and work on drainage issues. Additional concerns include roof replacement and HVAC upgrades which are both reaching the end of expected life. A very detailed report on the nature center follows in **Section VII**. Continued strong visitation numbers were experienced during the nineteenth year of operation.

15. Curtin Timber

This 90-acre timbered area located three miles northeast of Oto was purchased in February 1992. The area has been left in its natural state for the last 20 years, and provides excellent habitat for deer and wild turkey. A forty-foot easement for foot access to the property was also acquired from the landowner pending future acquisition of adjoining property that would provide access to the county gravel road. This area is managed as a public hunting area, and is used by many hunters, hikers and mushroom hunters.

The Board will be continuing to work on a proposal to expand this area by 120 acres.

16. Riverside Bluffs Area

This 135-acre loess hill native prairie area was acquired in 1992-93 from three different landowners through a state REAP grant that was awarded in 1991. The property is separated by West 19th Street and is located in the Riverside area of Sioux City. The area features virgin loess hills prairie along with outstanding scenic views overlooking the Missouri and Big Sioux River valleys. The area provides a unique, high quality prairie within the city limits.

The Woodbury County Conservation Foundation, which played a significant role in the grant application and acquisition process, continues to raise money for improvements on the area. For the third consecutive year in 2014, the Foundation provided funding to contract with a Conservation Corps Iowa crew of six people for five days to conduct prairie restoration work. Working in conjunction with Conservation Department staff and equipment, and with funding from a two-year grant from the American Great Outdoors program, it is anticipated that 24.5 acres of native prairie will be reclaimed. The Foundation also provided funding for a seasonal habitat intern who spent considerable time on this area and around the nature center.

Additional sections of fence need to be replaced or constructed to control unauthorized use and traffic. Hiking access for the property is maintained and allowed. Controlled management burns of the prairie areas and elimination of woody vegetation is being planned for the north segment in the next few years. The area is managed as a prairie preserve and includes management practices such as removal of woody vegetation and prescribed prairie burns. An encroachment issue along Military Road will need to be investigated in the next year.

VII. DOROTHY PECAUT NATURE CENTER



**Annual Report  
July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015**

**Woodbury County  
Conservation Board  
4500 Sioux River Road  
Sioux City, IA 51109-1657  
712-258-0838  
<<http://www.woodburyparks.com>>**

## Highlights



- Visitors flocked to the Discovery Forest Nature Playscape and Loess Falls Water Feature throughout the year.

- Visitation increased by more than 10% after the creation of these new attractions.

- For the third year, Woodbury County Conservation Foundation (WCCF) donated funds to hire a Habitat Stewardship Intern for the summer months. They also funded an Iowa Conservation Corps Crew to work on prairie management at Riverside Bluffs prairie for one week.



- Spurred by the Raptor House the Adopt an Animal program took flight and numerous private donations were received to assist with animal care.



- Visitation was curtailed during the entire month of August and most of September while the new entrance road to the Nature Center was completed. Once the road was re-opened on September 20, visitation was steady throughout the fall, with people anxious to visit the Nature Center, Playscape and hike on the trails.

- The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Nature Calls Fundraiser in September 2014 boasted one of the largest crowds yet with more than 550 people attending. It was held at the Sioux City Convention Center.

- The Nature Center & WCCB hosted the Annual Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards Conference in September 2014. Conference attendees were impressed by the Nature Center, programs, projects and WCCB parks.

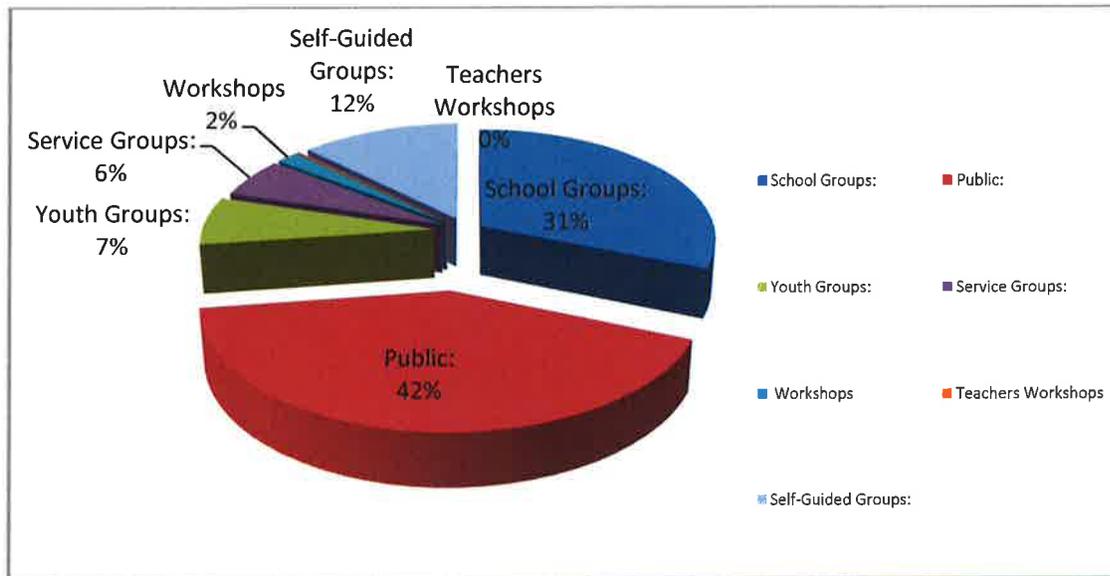
- The Nature Center installed restroom doors and the entry deck and patio was resurfaced.

- DPNC was also involved with the efforts to make Sioux City a Blue Zones Community and hosted several programs. The Nature Center was named an official Blue Zones Worksite in June 2014.



## Programs

DPNC's mission of providing quality environmental education and outdoor recreation is carried out through our educational philosophy of environmental awareness, sensitivity, knowledge, understanding, appreciation and responsible actions. Each philosophical step is considered when designing programs for different age levels. To ensure participants receive a positive learning experience our staff is committed to engaging all levels with experiential and interactive activities.



### Program Facets:

**Public and Family Programs:** A wide variety of programming is offered throughout the year for all aspects of families in our surrounding area. This past year we offered 177 public programs and had more than 5,300 participants. Due to the road construction the Nature Center was closed for nearly two months, and our public programs declined 2%. In the winter of 2015, the Nature Center also cooperated with the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation (WCCF) in hosting the *Planting a Native Garden for Pollinators* for a program by Benjamin Vogt. The "Play in the Parks" programs at Little Sioux Park over the Fourth of July weekend was another huge success. The interns provided free programs on archery, fishing, animals, etc. to hundreds of visitors. DPNC also hosted the OWLS (Older, Wiser, and Livelier Souls) for adults to learn more about environmental topics and our natural world. Nature Tales is a popular preschool story time with preschool children and an adult. Winter Fun Day and Summer Programs in the Parks continue to be big hits with the community. The Lunch Time for Animals is held once per month and allows the public to view the resident animals eating. This has been a popular addition to our program offerings. Our staff believes involving the entire family instills the values of our mission as well as providing quality activities for the residents of our area.



**School Groups:** DPNC is a field trip site for preschool through high school. The Center's staff provides resources, materials, and curriculum supplements for teachers to enhance the learning process of their students. Approximately 31% of our audience we reach is school children. This was an increase of 4% over last year. Within the tri-state area DPNC reaches an average of 150

schools including urban, rural, public, and private audiences. School audiences and outreach remained constant during the past year. Naturalists are working with the Sioux City School District and other schools to continue to promote our programs and facilities. DPNC continues to find new ways to reach students and teachers—an increasing challenge due to the lack of public funds for field trips.



Our Educational Programs Guide lists our offerings for school and youth ages preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. It is distributed to more than 1,200 teachers in the tri-state area. Last year our direct school programs reached more than 4,000 youth. Additionally, more than 1,600 students visited the Nature Center for a self-guided experience. For Non-Woodbury County Schools, we charge a user fee of \$1.00 per student. These fees are used to provide funding for additional programs, materials, staffing and supplies.

**College Groups:** Professors from at least four local colleges use the DPNC as an onsite educational tool for their students. DPNC staff also provides programming and internships for students entering the natural resources field. College and University classes from around the tri-state area use our facility for meetings, classes, and field studies. Staff conducts WILD, PLT and WET workshops to pre-service elementary and secondary education students.

**Youth Camps & Programs:** The DPNC offers Summer Day Camps that reach an average of 300 children annually. Many campers return each year due to the current program's seven levels. This program is developed with our education program goals in mind and is extremely popular. Typically, camps fill within a few weeks after the initial registration date and many camps have a waiting list.

The Summer Camps beginning in June 2015 were very successful with 299 children attending the 18 camp sessions. We were 96% full this year with only 14 spaces remaining open. This season included two sessions for 3-5 year olds with an adult; two sessions for 4-year old campers, five sessions for 5-6 year olds; four sessions for 7-8 year olds; two sessions for 9-10 year olds; two sessions for 11-12 year olds; and one session for 13-15 year olds. The revenue received from the camps helps to pay for the four Summer Naturalists positions. Camps are designed to offer engaging outdoor activities for ages 3 through 15. The Discovery Forest Nature Playscape continues to be a favorite component of attending camp and is a great way to help reinforce our outdoor awareness goals.

Camps ranged from 2-day session to 4-day sessions. This allows scheduling and financial flexibility for families as well as trying to offer more programming opportunities for the Education staff. We offered day trips for ages 12-15 and this was very well received. These campers were taken on a scavenger hunt around our Woodbury County parks and participated in outdoor skills activities such as canoeing, archery and geocaching. We hope to continue this option for these age groups.

Scholarships were again provided during the 2015 Summer Camp season. The Woodbury County Conservation Foundation co-sponsored the Camps to allow this opportunity and 7

scholarships were awarded totaling \$420. The WCCF sponsorship also assisted with transportation for children ages 11-12 to visit Little Sioux Park during their camp session.

**Outdoor Program Intern:** Jillian Lenz was hired to conduct these programs. Additionally Scheels, Woodbury County Pheasants Forever, Loess Hills Longbeards National Wild Turkey Federation, Siouxland Fly Fishing Club and River City Anglers provided money to fund this intern position in 2015.

On-site programming is available for schools, youth, civic and community groups throughout the year. Staff utilizes materials within our teaching collection and live reptiles and amphibians. Native American Youth, ESL youth, scouts, 4-H groups and others often request special programs from our staff. We reached more than 885 youth during our programs this year, mostly attributed to the summer programming by the Outdoor Skills Intern.



**Service Learning Groups/Volunteers:** Resource Naturalist Jim Henning had the opportunity to work with multiple service groups over the last year including; church, school and scout groups. Service groups worked on trail maintenance, put together bluebird box kits, landscaping, staining benches, roadside cleanup, playground construction and prairie rescue. This offers a good opportunity for people to help their community and learn about their natural areas at the same time.

**Service Group Programs:** Programming is also offered for groups such as Garden Clubs, Sertoma Clubs, Rotary, etc. throughout the year. A total of 718 people were reached through these meetings. The Playscape generated a lot of activity and programs and we increased our outreach in this area by 10%.

**Workshops:** The educational staff presents programs at a variety of workshops designed for adults in the profession. Last year a total of 227 people were reached in workshops. Primarily, the workshops included Hunter Education.

**Teacher Training:** In cooperation with Iowa's Area Education Agency (AEA 4/12) and Morningside College the DPNC staff is able to offer a variety of workshops including Project WILD, Project WET and Project Learning Tree (PLT) for teachers' continuing education and graduate credits. Pre-service workshops are offered to college students pursuing an educational degree. The past year, 2 workshops were offered, providing service to 17 pre-service teachers. Other groups use our facility for their teacher workshops as well.

**Community Development:** Staff networks with a variety of community agencies to maximize resources. Some partnerships include cooperative teaching with Area Education Agencies, schools, WIT and City of Sioux City. Snyder also joined the REAP-CEP Board and scores statewide grants for educational projects twice per year on behalf of the Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards. WCCB collaborated with the Sioux City Public Library and the City of South Sioux City Library for Summer Reading Program and provided programs in both Library buildings. Henning also provided geocaching programs in cooperation with Iowa State University Extension of Woodbury County. DPNC also cooperated with Sioux City Blue Zones Project on programs and public education.

**Casual Visitors:** DPNC is open to the public 9am-4:30pm Tuesday through Saturday and 1-4:30pm on Sundays. Evening programs are available by appointment. Areas of interest include hiking trails through native prairie and woodlands, wildlife viewing area, all new interpretive displays including an interactive badger in a tunnel under the prairie diorama, working beehive, and 400 gallon native fish aquarium, resident education animals, and butterfly and herb gardens. The Raptor House and Nature Playscape brought in several new visitors. An estimated 51,000 people visited the Nature Center last year.



**Grants:**

The WCCB and WCCF applied for 6 grants during this period, requesting and receiving a total of \$13,133.75.00. Total amount requested was \$15,350.75.

<b>Grants July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015</b>	<b>Amount received</b>	<b>Funds Targeted For</b>
Union Pacific Foundation	\$10,000.00	General Operating Expenses
Wal-Mart Foundation	\$2,000.00	Recycling bins
Iowa Native Plant Society	\$933.75	Prairie Rescue Equipment
Iowa Ornithologist's Union	\$200.00	Raptor education equipment
<b>Total received:</b>	<b>\$13,133.75</b>	

**Nature Center**

**Trails:** The trails provide a great interpretive asset for programs and wonderful recreational addition for park users. Resource Naturalist Jim Henning continues to work with volunteers and service learning groups. Wood chips were added to the trails when possible. Decks, benches and bridges along the trails are stained annually. Hazard trees are removed from grounds and trails as needed. An informational kiosk is located at each trail head and provides information on the trails, plant identification and natural history information. Student interns provide temporary display information for each of the kiosks. Future plans for trails include reworking areas along Hidden Valley, Bluestem Trail and White Tail Ridge to make the trails more level, thus a little more user friendly. There are also plans for further development of Fox Run and additional enhancements and signage along the other trails. Prairie management, including woody vegetation removal and prescribed fire, is coordinated by Mark Peterson and Jim Henning.



**Resource Management and Maintenance:** Projects over the last year included development and implementation of management plans for the playscape and water feature; the nature center

trails are an ongoing project- nature center staff and volunteers moved wood chips onto trails and spent many hours maintaining the stairways along our trails. Other maintenance projects over the year included mowing, snow removal and exhibit troubleshooting.

### **Exhibits**

The new exhibit gallery opened in April 2011. The changes have been well-received and we have had very little problems with the design and functionality. Any problems have been readily addressed by Split Rock Studios. A 5-year warranty was provided with their contract of service.



DPNC focused this year on outdoor exhibits—branching to outdoor exhibits with the Raptor Enclosure and Natural Playscape projects.

### **Raptor Enclosure**

The Raptor House grand opening and dedication of the Raptor House was held May 4, 2013. The facility houses two large birds of prey. In late April 2013 WCCB acquired two new raptors from Kay Neumann of SOAR. A Barred Owl and a Red-tailed Hawk were added to the live animal exhibits at the Nature Center. The public reception of the new birds, raptor house and Skye the Kestrel has been excellent. Raptors are used for educational programs for schools, camps and the public. Visitation has increased overall and many people stop to view the birds of prey.

### **Discovery Forest Nature Playscape**

The Nature Playscape is a nature-based play area that allows children to climb a tree fort, clamber over logs, create natural art, wade in the water and experience safe, outdoor play. Research shows that regular time in nature reduces stress, supports creativity



and imaginative play, facilitates better social and physical development and improves fitness, motor-skills and well-being. The Nature Playscape was designed to enable this process.



The Nature Playscape was designed to enable this process.

The Grand Opening was held October 12, 2013. The \$95,000+ project was made possible through generous individual contributions and numerous grants. More

than \$115,000 was raised.



In addition to the Nature Playscape, a Loess Falls Water Feature is located adjacent to the Nature Center and new Raptor House. The area is designed for gentle water play and observation. The upper pool has four large “stepping stone” boulders that people are able to cross to reach a quiet reflection area and sit on a bench. The lower pool is designed for people to gradually wade

into the water. There is a zero access point, even allowing mobility impaired guests to explore the water.

From the start, much of this project has been volunteer-driven. The Junior League of Sioux City played an integral part of the planning and funding process. Additional Playscape components added this year were Tic-Tac-Toe games, a checkerboard and a swinging bench which was an Eagle Scout project.



## Marketing

The WCCB and Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center maintains a positive relationship with local media. The naturalists participated in more than 180 interviews for radio, television and newspaper during the past year. In addition to media releases, PSA's, articles and interviews, WCCB parks are included in two I-29 rest area kiosks. Networking with Western Iowa Tourism Region, Siouxland Hospitality Association, Iowa Tourism Bureau, Iowa Welcome Centers and Siouxland Tourism Bureaus has allowed expanded visibility of our areas.



An advertisement was placed in the Siouxland Visitor's Guide to attract additional tours and visitors to our area. An ad was also placed in an advertising supplement for Iowa tourism. This piece reached more than 1 million households via the Des Moines Register, Omaha World Herald & Minneapolis newspapers. DPNC was featured in Iowa Department of Economic Development television and magazine ads to promote Iowa. WCCB also participated in advertising for a map of Sioux City. The Conservation Board provided an informational booth at the Woodbury County Fair.

### Woodbury Wanderings Newsletter

Our newsletter is published 3 times a year and features updates on our parks, natural history articles and our calendar of events. The newsletter is also online with the addition of our web page. The newsletter is mailed to approximately 2,200 households three times per year. Since June 2003, issues have also included a downloadable PDF version of the newsletter. Interested subscribers are encouraged to request their newsletter online or in this format to reduce mailing costs of the publication.

### Web Page      <<http://www.woodburyparks.com>>

The site features beautiful new photos, updated information, video clips of the cabins, shelters and nature center and the ability to donate online to the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation. Maps of all WCCB areas are available as .PDF files to download for free.



**Rentals**

The Nature Center is an attractive spot for business retreats and private rentals. The classrooms have been rented to numerous groups for anniversary parties, wedding receptions, family reunions and business retreats. More than 2,000 people (a total of 71 groups) used our rooms for a rental space. The revenue generated from these rentals goes to the General Fund for re-disbursement. Last year the Nature Center collected \$4,165.00 in revenue. The Nature Center recognizes groups such as Friends of Stone Park, Audubon Society, and Sierra Club that have a primary mission of conservation and education as “First Priority Users.” These groups are allowed free use of our meeting rooms. The number of groups using our facility at no charge was 31 groups. Rental rates for the nature center stayed the same as last year, with a price break for non-profit groups.

**Nature Nook Gift Shop**

The Nature Center gift shop sells items such as shirts, postcards, books, note cards, and nature-related toys and gifts. We also feature handmade items from local artists such as wooden bowls and jewelry. All proceeds from the shop go to the Nature Center.

**GIFT SHOP FINANCIAL REPORT**

July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015

<b>INCOME</b>	
Gift Shop	\$4,583.20
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>\$4,583.20</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
667-6102-461	
2601 Office supplies	(\$962.21)
2955 Unspecified	(\$1,036.32)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>(\$1,998.53)</u>
<b>Total Income over Expenses</b>	<u><u>\$2,584.67</u></u>

**Staff**

DPNC has a total of six staff dedicated to the operation and programs of the facility. Dawn Snyder serves as Nature Center Education Director and Head Naturalist and holds BS in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from Iowa State University. She has more than 27 years of experience in the interpretation field, with 18 years as DPNC Director and 9 years as Head Naturalist for WCCB. She serves as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation. Snyder also serves on the state REAP-CEP grant review committee as a representative for IACCB and Loess Hills Alliance Board and Economic Development committee.

Theresa Kruid, Naturalist, has been at the DPNC for 18 years. She has 23 years of experience in the interpretation field and holds BS in Recreation and Park Management (Environmental Interpretation and Outdoor Education emphasis) from Pennsylvania State University. The

naturalist developed DPNC's successful summer day camp program which continues to grow each year.

Jim Henning has been the Resource Naturalist for six years. He has a Natural Resource Management degree from Upper Iowa University. His duties include programming, resource management and building and grounds maintenance.

DPNC Support staff includes 2 part-time receptionists, Pam Pfautsch and Marilyn Milbrodt, and a Part-time Volunteer Coordinator/ Receptionist, Betty West. Summer staff for 2014 included Eric Koithan, Maria Korver, Katie Larson and Tory Warnke served as seasonal employees to assist with summer programs and events in 2014. Another Iowa DNR grant allowed us to hire Aerial Wauhob as the Outdoor Skills intern. Jon Halvorson was hired as 2014 Habitat Stewardship Intern funded by WCCF. Interns for Summer 2015 were Paige LaPlant, Becky Ryan, Katelyn Brinkerhoff and Olivia Parks. Jillian Lenz served as the Outdoor Program intern funded by various local organizations. Karter Keefer was the Habitat Stewardship Intern funded by WCCF. DPNC general hours are 9am to 4:30pm Tuesday through Saturday and Sunday from 1-4:30pm.



Each of the interns had a chance to experience habitat management and/or trail work for two weeks during the summer. Most of them had the chance to work with service groups and all of them were trained with chainsaws and brush cutting equipment. They each also had the opportunity to learn how to operate our John Deere Gator and Bobcat skid loader.



### **Volunteers**

During the past 12 months volunteers logged more than 2,424.75 hours of volunteer service. Support staff at the Nature Center and WCCB is comprised of approximately 156 non-paid active volunteers, 32 of these being Junior Volunteers under the age of 18. Volunteer duties include animal care, gardening, reception & clerical, summer camp naturalist assistants, prairie rescue, educational, curatorial, research, trail maintenance, naturalist program assistance, fund raising and general maintenance. Eight service groups also assisted with prairie rescue/habitat management, mulching trails, staining, play scape, water feature and several maintenance projects; along with Two Eagle Scout Projects being completed, one at Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, the other at Snyder Bend Park. Contributed service translates to an estimated \$27,962.44. Volunteers were recognized at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Volunteer Recognition and Awards Dinner in March 2015.



### **Conservation Awards**

This was the 26<sup>th</sup> year for the WCCB to confer awards to outstanding individuals for their dedicated service. Gary Shaner received the *Friend of Conservation* award for his support of the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center programs and projects. Sheryl Banks was recognized for the *Conservation Educator* award for her 40 years as a Kindergarten teacher.



**Conservation Educator  
Sheryl Banks**



**Friend of Conservation  
Gary Shaner**

**Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center  
Volunteer Contributed Services July 1, 2014 –June 30, 2015**

	<u>Hours</u>	<u>\$/Hour</u>	<u>\$Value</u>
<b>Education/Interpretive (information services, docents, teachers, etc.)</b>			
Camp Assistant (23)	414.75	\$9.25	\$3,836.44
Naturalist Assistant (13)	221	\$9.25	\$2,044.25
Special Event (95)	501.25	\$9.25	\$4,636.56
<b>Administrative/Clerical/Maintenance (office, routine maintenance, etc.)</b>			
Clerical (6)	84.5	\$9.25	\$781.63
Maintenance (91)	460	\$9.25	\$4,255.00
<b>Curatorial/Collections (research, gardens, care of objects, etc.)</b>			
Gardening (10)	87.25	\$9.25	\$807.06
Trail Maintenance (12)	85	\$9.25	\$786.25
Play scape Project (19)	77	\$9.25	\$712.25
Prairie Rescue/Habitat Management (54)	92	\$9.25	\$851.00
Animal Transport (1)	3	\$10.00	\$30.00
<b>Professional (legal, fundraising, guest speakers, consultants, etc.)</b>			
Fundraising Solicitation (3)	36	\$25.00	\$900.00
Fundraising Special Events (18)	244	\$18.00	\$4,357.00
Graphic Artists (2)	60	\$30.00	\$1,800.00
Consultants (2)	17	\$25.00	\$425.00
Program Instructors (9)	18	\$20.00	\$360.00
Veterinarian (1)	4	\$90.00	\$360.00
Accountant (1)	8	\$90.00	\$720.00



scholarships for underprivileged youth. They also contributed approximately \$1,000 in educational materials and supported the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar. They also funded a 6-person Iowa Conservation Corps crew to work at Riverside Bluffs for one week. They continue conservation education and natural area protection in our area. The minutes of WCCF meetings are on file at the WCCB Office.

The WCCF initiated an annual membership campaign in 2003 to increase visibility and assist with special needs. The 2014-2015 membership campaign built upon the success of the past nine years. This year’s membership stayed the same but the amount raised was slightly higher, showing an average gift amount of \$96.00.

Current members of the WCCF Board of Directors are: Brian Hazlett, President; Chris Zellmer-Zant, Vice President; Dawn Snyder, Secretary/Treasurer; Dianne Blankenship; Herman Schultz; Bruce Hopkins; Norbert Ruhland; Randy Kramer, Anne Shaner and Rod Tondreau. Online donations can be received via a PayPal account, allowing more avenues to donate. WCCF is the channeling agency for the Nature Calls fundraiser and continues to be a vehicle for transfer of large donations to the Woodbury County Conservation Board.

**Endowment**

In May 2012 the WCCF established an endowment fund within the Siouxland Community Foundation. This will give donors a simple and efficient way to continue supporting the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation (WCCF) while providing us with a source of lasting support. The Woodbury County Conservation Foundation Endowment Fund is designed to give donors access to the most favorable tax advantages available as well as help WCCF develop planned giving programs. A separate Special Projects Fund within the Siouxland Community Foundation was established in Fall of 2013.



**List of Donors**

Numerous individuals and organizations assisted us in the past year. We would like to acknowledge them for their generous support.

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Rudolphs Shoes, Rae Pendergast  
Norb Ruhland  
Jim & Jean Salisbury  
Pat & Catherine Saulsbury  
Scheels All Sports, Penni McIntosh  
Rick & Angie Schneider  
Second Chance Woods, J. Mark Lary  
Gary & Anne Shaner  
Shepherd Iron Works, Tim & Janet Lohafer  
Sherwin Williams, Errol Lowery  
Sioux Air Inc., Gene & Ginger Martin  
Sioux City Convention & Tourism, Erika Newton  
Sioux City Explorers, Shane Tritz  
Sioux City Musketeers Hockey Assoc., Heather Campbell  
Siouxland Area Hy-Vee Stores, Scott Wieck  
Siouxland Cyclists  
Snowflake Woods, Lynn Jarvis  
Soma Yoga & Healing, Jackie Paulson  
Stoney Creek Inn, Jenn Pavone  
Summer's Canoes, Greg Leonard  
Mark & Barb Taylor  
Texas Roadhouse, Brian Warren  
The Feed Shed, Inc., Janice Criss  
Thorpe & Co. Jewellers, Karen Clark  
Tires Tires Tires, Mitch Johnson  
Scott Toben  
Tri-State Dental, Drs. Jeff & Amber Reinking  
Valiant Vineyards, Eldon Nygaard  
VIZIO, Tracie Derochie  
Wal-Mart, Renae  
Wellness Works Massage, Jeanne Thune  
What Women Want, Deb Speckmann  
Wheelock Family Dentistry, Marilyn Wheelock  
Wild Hill Honey, Tori Engelhardt  
Wine and Other Old Things, Lea  
WineStyles, Jerry & Christine Janssen  
Wray Wright  
Bill & Dotty Zales

## Animal Adoptions Donors

Sharron K. Bair  
Mrs. Ehrig's Battle Creek Ida Grove First Graders  
Juliann Delperdang  
Dick's Bait & Tackle  
Alissa Johnson  
Scott Kayl  
Gary & Joy Larson  
Gene Loreth  
Morgan Mahon  
Gene & Ginger Martin  
Chloe McClure  
Brenda Norvell  
Sheryl Schmitz  
Dean & Paula VanRoekel



## Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center

### Staff

Rick Schneider, *Conservation Board Director*  
Mark Peterson, *Deputy Director*  
Dawn Snyder, *Education Program Director*  
Theresa Kruid, *Naturalist*  
Jim Henning, *Resource Naturalist*  
Barb Schultz, *Secretary*  
Pam Pfautsch, *Part-time Receptionist*  
Marilyn Milbrodt, *Part-time Receptionist*  
Betty West, *Part-time Volunteer*  
Coordinator/Receptionist  
Rita Birke & Amelia Ziemer, *Senior Worker*

### Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday 9am – 4:30pm  
Sunday 1 – 4:30pm

*Closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.*



## ***A Program of Woodbury County***

### **DPNC Mission Statement:**

To provide quality environmental education programs and outdoor recreation experiences; to manage our natural resources in an ecologically sound manner; and to conserve and interpret our natural, historic, and cultural resources.

### **Goal of the Environmental Education Program:**

- To help citizens of all ages and backgrounds develop an awareness and sensitivity toward the environment.
- To acquire knowledge and understanding for effective environmental action.
- To foster positive attitudes and patterns of conduct toward the environment.

**VIII. FY '15 FINANCIAL STATEMENT**  
**GENERAL CONSERVATION BUDGET**

RECEIPTS

Nature Center Rental	\$ 4,230.00
Fuel Tax Refunds	3,630.59
Newsletter Advertising	625.00
Miscellaneous	100.00
Taxation	<u>1,530,818.35</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS	<u>\$ 1,539,403.94</u>

DISBURSEMENTS

<u>Administration</u>	
Department Heads	\$ 102,515.92
Supervisory	72,282.08
Wage Plan Employees	44,398.74
Matching FICA	16,387.69
Matching IPERS	20,460.83
Emp. Hospitalization	34,636.36
Life Insurance	86.40
Dental Ins.	1,057.32
LTD Insurance	426.75
Gas/Oil	2,727.36
Office Supplies	2,127.68
Magazines & Books	416.48
Wearing/Safety Apparel.	870.35
Publishing Notices	725.80
Printing	1,937.12
Postage	935.29
Travel/Expense	3,387.43
Professional Services	514.00
School of Instruction	4,460.00
Medical Fees	215.00
Motor Vehicle Expense	2,521.20
Radio Expense	150.00
Dues\Memberships	2,815.00
Tax Allotment	5,342.73
Motor Vehicle Purchases	-0-
Office Equipment & Furn.	1,129.99
Lease Purchase Agreement	<u>4,396.77</u>
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 326,924.29</u>

County Parks

Supervisory	\$ 134,367.15
Wage Plan Employees	201,056.22
Temporary Emp.	139,454.88
Overtime	-0-
Matching FICA	35,451.84
Matching IPERS	41,012.17
Emp. Hospitalization	83,071.84
Life Insurance	187.20
Dental Ins.	2,290.86
LTD Insurance	919.97
Chemical Supplies	5,808.08
Agricultural & Hort.	5,278.69
Custodial Supplies	8,194.15
Gas/Oil	41,193.23

Arms/Ammunition	2,096.75
Wearing/Safety Apparel.	8,034.76
Telephone/Telegraph	4,525.76
Cell Phones	3,448.20
School of Instruction	4,805.00
Natural & LP Gas	3,763.90
Garbage	15,204.60
Electricity	61,475.30
Maintenance	35,945.33
Equipment Maintenance	17,972.15
Motor Vehicle Expense	8,579.35
Radio Expense	978.94
Furn/Equip. Purchase	5,576.19
Lease/Purchase Agreement	-0-
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 870,692.51</u>

Naturalist

Wage Plan Employ. PT	\$ 52,384.79
Supervisory	59,907.12
Wage Plan Employees	87,364.50
Temporary Emp.	-0-
Matching FICA	14,537.56
Matching IPERS	17,829.23
Emp. Hospitalization	42,888.12
Life Insurance	86.40
Dental Ins.	1,057.32
LTD Insurance	427.26
Gas/Oil	1,367.79
Office Supplies	732.22
Magazines & Books	13.95
Wearing Apparel	721.76
Printing	3,026.62
Postage	1,132.44
Mileage	-0-
Travel/Expense	718.02
Professional Serv.	-0-
School/Instruction	306.00
Motor Vehicle Expense	1,169.58
Dues/Membership	270.00
Office Equipment & Furn.	327.96
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 286,268.64</u>

Nature Center

Janitorial Supplies	\$ 744.66
Gas/Oil	937.72
Wearing/Safety Apparel	84.94
Telephone/Tele.	4,836.21
Cell Phone	2,549.95
Garbage	439.00
Electricity	10,746.54
Building Maint.	13,653.16
Equip. Maint.	587.90
Contractual Services	20,938.42
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 55,518.50</u>

TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS (ACCRUAL BASIS):	\$ 1,539,403.94
APPROVED BUDGET:	\$ 1,540,157.00
BALANCE JUNE 30, 2015 (ACCRUAL BASIS):	\$ 753.06

**257-022**

**NATURE CENTER**

**ASSETS**

Interest	\$	-0-
Contributions		34,474.36
Accrued Assets Adjustment		(20.00)

TOTAL ASSETS (ACCURAL BASIS): \$ 34,454.36

**LIABILITIES**

Transfers Out (To Reserve fund)	\$	72,288.82
Accrual Liabilities Adjustment		-0-

TOTAL LIABILITIES (ACCURAL BASIS): \$ 72,288.82

NET ASSETS OVER/UNDER LIABILITIES: \$ (37,834.46)

BALANCE JULY 1, 2014: \$ 100,155.95

ACCRUAL ADJUSTMENT: \$ -0-

BALANCE JUNE 30, 2015 (ACCRUAL BASIS): \$ 62,321.49

**667-610**

**CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND**

**ASSETS**

User Fees	\$	281,050.50
Nature Center Program Fees		31,675.50
Ag Rentals		26,866.46
Concession Rentals		510.00
Equipment Rentals		7,682.20
Donations		23,391.54
Reimbursements		13,353.15
Interest		3.99
Grants		10,519.72
Gift Shop Revenue		3,540.80
Miscellaneous		8,047.62
Transfers In (Fund 257)		72,288.82
Transfers In (Fund 266)		38,417.00
Accrued Assets Adjustment		680.51

TOTAL ASSETS (ACCRUAL BASIS): \$ 518,027.81

**LIABILITIES**

**610-1 Administration**

Land Acquisitions	\$	80,943.40
Capital Improvements		70,572.62
Accrued Liabilities Adjustment		195.33
Sub-Total:	\$	151,711.35

**610-2 Nature Center Gift Shop**

Office Supplies	\$	-0-
Magazines & Books		-0-
Unspecified		1,998.53
Printing		144.00
Sub-Total:	\$	<u>2,142.53</u>

**610-3 Nature Center Programs**

Temp. Employ.	\$	27,850.75
Over Time		-0-
Matching FICA		2,130.58
Matching IPERS		-0-
Office Supplies		1,738.41
Unspecified		3,040.24
Official Publ. & Legals		2,099.50
Printing		747.15
Buildings		-0-
Office Equipment/ Furniture		11,843.68
Accrued Liabilities Adjustment		-0-
Sub-Total:	\$	<u>49,450.31</u>

**Transfers Out** (To Debt Service fund) \$ 107,506.62

**Transfers Out** (To CIP fund) \$ 193,232.72

TOTAL LIABILITIES (ACCRUAL BASIS): \$ 504,043.53

NET ASSETS OVER/UNDER LIABILITIES: \$ 13,984.28

BALANCE JULY 1, 2014 (ACCRUAL BASIS): \$ 352,314.69

ACCRUAL ADJUSTMENT: \$ 5,644.04

BALANCE JUNE 30, 2015 (ACCRUAL BASIS): \$ 371,943.01

**266-610**

**REAP FUND**

**ASSETS**

Per County Allocation received FY 15	\$ 9,653.00
Per Capita Allocations received FY 15	31,778.00
Interest	444.66
Accrued Assets Adjustment	<u>(270.23)</u>
 TOTAL ASSETS (ACCRUAL BASIS):	 \$ 41,605.43

**LIABILITIES**

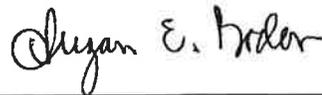
**610-1 Administration**

Capital Improvements	\$ 43,917.00
Accrued Liabilities Adjustment	<u>\$ (5,500.00)</u>
Sub-Total:	\$ 38,417.00
 TOTAL LIABILITIES (ACCRUAL BASIS):	 \$ 38,417.00
 NET ASSETS OVER/UNDER LIABILITIES:	 \$ 3,188.43
 BALANCE JULY 1, 2014 (ACCRUAL BASIS):	 \$ 91,623.65
 ACCRUAL ADJUSTMENT:	 \$ (5,500.00)
 BALANCE JUNE 30, 2015 (ACCRUAL BASIS):	 \$ 89,312.08

Respectfully Submitted,



**Donald P. Dixon, President**



**Suzan Boden, Board Secretary**



**Rick D. Schneider, Director**