

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2021 BOARD MEETING**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, April 15, 2021, at the Dorothy Pecaute Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Zellmer-Zant (via phone), Cindy Bennett, and Neil Stockfleth,

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Aaron Gehling and Suzan Boden

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

None

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Stockfleth, acting Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

Dan asked to amend the agenda by adding Nature Calls Survey and Discussion under Staff Reports/Old Business and moving it to the beginning of the meeting, so that discussion is not rushed.

MOTION by Chris, second by Cindy.

To approve the consent agenda as amended.

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting.
- C2. Approve the March 2021 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the March 2021 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - Mike & Terri Ferrell for donation of Saw-whet Owl taxidermy mount
 - Greg Polley, AAA JB Taxidermy for Saw-whet Owl taxidermy
 - Chuck Johnson for miscellaneous tools
 - Bob Morrissey for birdseed

- Anne Shaner for birdseed
- MacDonald Smith Memorial gifts: (in addition to last month's report)
 - Craig & Kathryn Christiansen \$50.00
 - Jim & Barb Redmond \$25.00
 - Mary McCoy \$25.00
 - Mary & Richard Motz \$50.00
 - Mary Kay Kollars \$50.00
 - Michael Hansen \$50.00
 - Robert S. Kinsey III \$25.00
 - Susan & Brian Lee \$ 50.00
 - Tina Hall \$50.00
 - Waitt Foundation \$100.00

ITEM R1.A Old Business - Nature Calls Survey and Discussion

Dawn stated that she had been hitting roadblocks in arranging the shuttle bus, parking, tents, etc. needed to hold Nature Calls outside at the nature center and that she had received feedback suggesting it be held inside. She then sent out an online survey to assess comfort level. Over 90% of the 150 responders were in favor of holding Nature Calls this year with 35.7% being “very likely” to attend if held indoors. The remaining survey results were reviewed.

Dawn expressed concern about having the event in person and not being sure if enough volunteers will feel comfortable helping indoors. Discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of holding it outside at the nature center versus inside at the Sioux City Convention Center.

Other options to raise funds were mentioned, such as an expanded outdoors Fall Fest with silent auction or raffles. Dan stated that Nature Calls has been bringing nearly \$30,000 into the budget to help with interns and building repairs and maintenance, and he was concerned about losing that, especially after experiencing \$17,000 in programs revenue loss last year due to COVID.

It was suggested that Dawn survey volunteers to see if they are comfortable and willing to help if the event is held indoors. Volunteers would wear masks, and ticket sales could be limited. Board members indicated that they were in favor of moving forward with holding the event at the convention center if volunteers are willing.

ITEM R2. Habitat Stamp Grant – Resolution to apply for Briese Property

Dan announced that the Habitat Stamp grant applications are due May 15th. He recommended applying for this grant for the Briese property purchase in the amount of \$214,835. The WCCB cost share would be \$174,775 (45%) and will be partly covered by a \$50,000 North American Waterfowl Act grant and a \$10,000 Pheasants Forever local chapter grant. The remaining \$114,775 would be paid from the WCCB CIP and REAP funds.

MOTION by Cindy second by Chris

To authorize submission of a Habitat Stamp grant application for the Briese property acquisition with a 45% match and to approve and adopt the following resolution.¹¹⁻²¹

Whereas, the Woodbury County Conservation Board is interested in acquiring and/or wildlife habitat by means of the above-named project, AND Wildlife Habitat Stamp funds are required for the project, NOW

¹¹⁻²¹ To authorize submission of a Habitat Stamp grant application for the Briese property acquisition with a 45% match and to approve and adopt the following resolution.

THEREFORE, the Woodbury County Conservation Board does hereby make application for assistance, AND further agrees to abide by all the covenants of Section 110.3, Code of Iowa 1981, and Chapter 23 (290), Iowa Administrative Code, AND further certifies this resolution was officially adopted by the Woodbury County Conservation Board at a legal meeting held on the 15th day of April in the year of 2021.

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

ITEM R3. COVID Relief Funds – Discussion and request to Supervisors

Dan stated that Woodbury County is set to receive \$20 million in COVID relief from the federal government over the next two years to be used to replace lost revenues or increased construction costs due to COVID. The first \$10 million is to arrive around May 15th. Dan informed the Supervisors that the WCCB has incurred the above-mentioned types of losses and would be applying for such funds. Dan was informed that the first \$10 million is going to be put towards the jail but to still submit a request. He presented a preliminary estimate of revenue loss of \$53,000. He will also look at the increased construction costs and add that to the request, as well as losses from the cancelled 2020 Nature Calls event.

MOTION by Chris second by Cindy

To approve and authorize the Director to pursue COVID relief funds through the Board of Supervisors. ¹²⁻²¹

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

ITEM R4. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake – Beach & Road/Campground Projects – Informational

Dan reported that he had met with Brandon Deeds to value engineer the construction documents for the Brown's Lake beach project to save some costs. The beach/concession stand construction will be separated from the road/campground project and bid out separately. He would like to get the grading, sidewalk and beach work done to allow use of the beach this summer. The concession stand timing will depend on contractor availability. Once bids are awarded and costs determined, the bond request can be made to the Supervisors. It will take a month or two to finalize the bond.

Brian reviewed the campground and road project. He presented a preliminary sketch of the basic campground layout incorporating well-used features and creating longer, quality sites with at least 40' spacing between them. One site was left open to allow for a trail head connecting the campground to the beach, providing safer access. The parking lot was also extended to accommodate more vehicles. He noted that the plan is to provide full hookups to each site if funding allows. The campground work would start after the park closes in the fall, and the concrete would be laid in the spring. More detailed plans will be created in GIS, and cost estimates will be obtained.

Dan stated that the fence survey has not been done yet. He sent them a file showing the boundaries and noted that the boundary line where the fence was placed is not the same as what

¹²⁻²¹ To approve and authorize the Director to pursue COVID relief funds through the Board of Supervisors.

shows on Beacon. He also found a fencing agreement with the landowner, showing agreement to move the fence to where it is now and stating that WCCB would maintain it. It also states that if the pins are moved, the agreement would need to be renegotiated. A survey will be done to find the three pins in question to show the boundary along the narrow strip of beach and the north/south boundary.

2. Brown's Lake – Shoreline & Pier Update – Informational

Dan reported that the pier is done, and the fish structures are in place. The only thing left to complete is the bank armoring where the dock was by the campground. There is riprap, but it needs to be covered by red granite. Lieber was supposed to start moving equipment in last week to finish the grading, but weather was most likely a factor in the delay. The deadline to finish without a penalty is May 1st.

Dan showed drone photos of Snyder Bend lake and the extremely low water level. He said that the DNR should be able to easily kill off what is left.

ITEM R5. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. May Meeting Date

Dan reported that Aaron has had a schedule change and Thursdays will not work for him this summer and into the fall. He asked for meetings to be held on Tuesdays or Wednesdays if possible.

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 11, 2021, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Budget Amendment

Dan presented his proposed FY21 budget amendment. Amendments to the General Basic fund totaling \$13,990 include costs for ILEA training and equipment due to unexpected employee turnover, a computer for Tyler Flammang's new GIS duties, and the annual nature center HVAC maintenance contract. The amendment also includes an additional \$100,000 in spending authority for the CIP fund to pay off Phase II of the Brown's Lake shoreline improvement project. Revenues are being amended to account for grants received towards that shoreline project as well.

MOTION by Chris second by Cindy

To approve the FY21 budget amendment as presented.¹³⁻²¹

VOTE: Aye: Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, and Neil Stockfleth

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling and Suzan Boden

¹³⁻²¹ To approve the FY21 budget amendment as presented.

c. Grant Updates

Brian completed the Fish Habitat Stamp grant paperwork for \$41,868 which should be received soon. The MRHD award of \$100,000 has been received, as well as \$10,000 from Pheasants Forever.

d. Cabin Pricing Discussion

Discussion was held regarding cabin pricing and the possibility of going to the same rate for weekends and weekdays. A cabin usage comparison was provided showing weekday usage at 46% and weekend usage at 54% of the total over the past three years. Dan mentioned that the state association had recently conducted a similar survey, but the results were not available yet. The board would like to see the averages across the state before taking any action.

e. Possible Equipment Purchases

Dan stated that a couple pieces of equipment may be purchased to aid in Tyler Flammang's new job duties of helping in the field and with burns, including a small trailer for hauling the side-by-side or mowers (\$3,500) and a slide-in fire rig unit for use at the nature center and Riverside Bluffs (\$1,799). He explained that there is \$5,709 left over in the budget under the school of instruction and travel expense lines due to COVID that could be used to cover the equipment. The board agreed by consensus to proceed with purchasing these items.

f. Old Business

(This item was amended and moved to Item R1.A.)

g. Other Business

Dan previously emailed board members some brief information on the Winnebago legislation. Brian recently found the file from a few years ago regarding Winnebago Bend. Dan will glean important information and send it out to refresh everyone's memory to be prepared if legislation moves forward. The potential impact is the loss of lake access from the boat ramp to the south and the shoreline in front of campground and to the south, which would impact cabin usage.

2. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Campgrounds will open shortly, so staff has been getting park facilities ready, turning on water, shocking wells, hiring and training seasonal staff, etc.
- The camping kickoff weekend will be held April 30 through May 2. Campers will receive a free camping coupon to use later in the season and a small promotional item.
- Contractors have moved equipment in to work on the Salsness property. They started with grubbing out trees for the dam construction and repair. They will be moving a dozer in probably next week to start moving dirt. Brian talked to them about making sure there was a high spot in the middle of the crown, and they had already accounted for that. As soon as the repairs are finished, they plan to start the nature center project.
- Bigelow Park staff has finished repairs on the fishing jetty. There was high water the first year and a lot of wave action which moved the smaller material that edged the sidewalk. Staff put in larger riprap to widen it and protect it more. They put in railroad ballast to plug little holes and finished it up with class a quartz.
- Ten fish structures were placed under the new fishing pier at Bigelow Park to help attract fish. The structures were constructed and donated by former board member, Don Dixon.

- Snyder Bend staff has filled in areas on the shore at Snyder Bend where the riprap was missing due to damage from the 2019 flood.
- Field staff from all three districts came together to complete burns today at Owego. Another piece is left to complete next week. A three-year rotation will be put into place to keep it on a schedule going forward. Because this was a safe area, staff could be placed in different roles to gain experience.
- A burn was completed on approximately 80 acres at Southwood yesterday. One piece hadn't been burned since 2006.
- The cooperative burn week for the Loess Hills group (Woodbury, Monona, & Plymouth) is coming up the last week of April with 54 people currently signed up to help.
- Janitorial supplies have been delivered for the year.
- Brian showed a sample of a small wood sign made for the cabins with the laser engraver. Tyler has also made cutting boards with our logo out of scrap wood to sell in the gift shop. The machine provides the potential to make a variety of signs.

3. Nature Center Activities

Dawn reported on the following nature center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for March was presented. It was noted that virtual and public programs were omitted.
- Virtual programs are still being held. There are a few school field trips on the calendar.
- Staff is working on the summer schedule. Summer camp registration started last week with 78 registrations having been received so far. Camps are 50% full after today.
- Staff is looking at public programs to be held at the nature center and the parks this summer.
- Sioux City schools are not allowing any field trips and not allowing DPNC staff to visit the schools.
- Progress is being made on the garden redesign. Volunteers will be working in the gardens tomorrow in preparation for the plants to arrive in mid-May.
- The new wildlife camera and egg slide show exhibits have been popular.
- The security camera on the raptor house has been installed.
- Staff is preparing for summer interns and programs.
- Theresa, Kari and Tyler attended the Iowa Association of Naturalists meeting on March 17th in person near Harlan, Iowa, and participated online on March 18th-19th. Woodbury County will be hosting the Fall IAN conference at the nature center for approximately 50-80 people.
- Kari will reach her six-month anniversary date on April 20th.
- According to Google analytics, close to 68,000 people used Google to find our website last month. Website use ramped up during summer camp registration.

ITEM R6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chair, Aaron Gehling