

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025, BOARD MEETING**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, November 13, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Aaron Gehling and Chris Zellmer-Zant

**STAFF PRESENT**

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Theresa Kruid, and Dawn Bostwick

**OTHERS PRESENT**

None

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Limoges called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

**CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS**

None

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None

**ITEM R1.      Approve Consent Agenda**

**MOTION** by Cindy, second by Neil.

To approve the consent agenda.

**VOTE:**

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth and Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling and Chris Zellmer-Zant

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

C1. Approve the Minutes of the October 9, 2025, Regular Meeting

C2. Approve the October 2025 Claims and Expenditures

C3. Receive and Place on File the October 2025 Financial/Budget Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:

- \$500 Gift Card from Scheels for Hike-a-Thon prizes
- Coffee and Tea from Leesa McNeil

- Pumpkins & Gourds from Donna Popp, Adele's Pumpkin Patch, Hillside Harvest, Sherri Hinkelman, Bill & Kathy Stehr, Roger & Linda Slight, Rod Tondreau, Neil & Beth Stockfleth, Muth Farm
- \$50 from Audie & Julie Baughman in honor of Dave Shellhammer 'to feed the animals'
- \$177 in donations from multiple donors during the 30th anniversary celebration
- \$100 J's Nutrition, Holly June. Drink special from Oct. 1-18, 2025
- \$50 from Lanie Berger in memory of her cat

**ITEM R2. Peter's Pit Gravel Options**

Brian stated that Dan had informed the board last month that Bedrock Gravel had expressed interest in extracting sand from Peter's Pit and had offered \$1 per ton, estimating a potential volume of 250,000 to 500,000 tons. Following the last meeting, Neil sent an email to Dan suggesting that he negotiate the price. Dan has since consulted with Laura from the Secondary Roads Department to seek guidance on fair pricing and appropriate procedures. Laura recommended that the opportunity be put out for bid. Brian noted that Hallett Materials may be interested in the project as well.

Given this input, Dan and Brian recommended proceeding with a formal bidding process to determine the best offer. It was also noted that the Secondary Roads Department has relinquished its mining license, so any contractor would be responsible for obtaining the necessary license to mine. The board agreed that the project should be advertised to solicit bids.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Cindy.

To solicit bids for potential graveling extraction project at Peter's Pit. <sup>25-26</sup>

**VOTE:**

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth and Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling and Chris Zellmer-Zant

*(Dan arrived at 4:08 p.m.)*

**ITEM R3. Department Reports**

**1. Nature Center Activities**

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for October was presented.
- The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary event was attended by over 500 people. Over 120 stayed for the eagle presentation in the afternoon.
- The Hike-a-Thon was popular with 107 people registered and over 2,500 miles hiked. The finish line event was not as well attended with only about 30 people. Staff is planning to hold another hike-a-thon next year as a fundraiser.
- In celebration of the nature center's 30th anniversary, J's Nutrition created a limited-edition drink during the month of October. For each drink sold, \$1 was donated to the

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<sup>25-26</sup> To solicit bids for potential graveling extraction project at Peter's Pit.

nature center, with owner, Holly June, generously matching the total, resulting in a \$100 donation.

- Theresa thanked board members for attending a joint meeting with the Foundation in October. The Foundation is planning to have their annual meeting and Wildlife Encounter program at Briar Cliff University. However, they need to review the insurance requirements before finalizing the location.
- The annual membership letter will be sent in early December. Theresa will be working on updating the mailing list next week. The flyer has been sent to Record Printing.
- Theresa has been attending local trainings with the Siouxland Community Foundation and Siouxland Philanthropy. She has also been asked to join a non-profit peer group that meets monthly.
- Kari & Mariah attended the IAN Fall workshop.
- Theresa and Pam Ridgway met with Katie Roberts of the Siouxland Community Foundation. Katie recommended that the foundation board meet with a consultant to review policies and procedures.
- Nature Calls:
  - Theresa presented the final numbers from the Nature Calls event. She reported that this year's event had the lowest attendance since 2005 and resulted in the lowest net income on record. Several contributing factors were identified, including scheduling conflicts with other large events on the same day, increased ticket prices, general economic conditions, and higher event expenses.
  - The estimated cost for hosting the event at the convention center next year is projected to exceed \$24,000. Additionally, the live auction experienced low participation, with many attendees leaving before it began.
  - Neil requested that Theresa obtain a cost estimate from the Marriott as a potential alternative venue, and Cindy suggested also checking with the Arena Sports Academy.
  - Theresa reported that the convention center has been tentatively reserved for Nature Calls on September 19, 2026. However, this date once again conflicts with ArtSplash, which is scheduled for the same weekend.
  - Additionally, Theresa shared that she was contacted earlier this week by a representative of the Sioux City Symphony, who respectfully requested that Nature Calls be moved to the fourth weekend of September to avoid a conflict with their 25th anniversary celebration, also planned for September 19.
  - Theresa noted that the fourth weekend of September is typically challenging for beer vendors due to commitments to Oktoberfest events. However, she will reach out to the vendors to see if they would be willing to supply product if volunteers were available to handle the pouring.

## **2. Park Activities**

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- All parks are now closed for the winter season. Staff is working on winterizing facilities, including blowing out the sewer lines at Little Sioux. This process is taking some time to complete since it is the first time with the new system.
- Tyler and Brian met Neal and the CF Industries manager on-site to finalize and mark property boundaries. Josh sprayed thistle in the area. Staff mowed the south tract, and CF Industries mowed the north tract.

- Little Sioux staff removed all items from the concession stand, and an epoxy coating was applied to the floor, which turned out very well. Brandon Deeds said there is still potential for the front sidewalks to be poured before winter. Only a few small tasks remain to complete the project.
- Southwood staff collaborated with an Eagle Scout candidate to install a new backcountry campsite. The site has already generated interest. It will follow the same open/close schedule and tent camping rate as other sites. Brian commented that the scout did an excellent job.
- The new Kawasaki Mule arrived yesterday but not all components have been installed yet. It is expected to be ready by next week
- Officers attended Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) training in Sioux Center. The training was provided at no cost and fulfills a new legal requirement for officers to complete the course every three years. The training focused on vehicle maneuvering rather than high-speed driving.
- Neil commended staff on their continued hard work and the many successful projects completed over the past several years.

#### **ITEM R4. Capital Improvement Projects**

##### **1. Little Sioux Park Internet Update**

Brian provided an update on the internet installation project at Little Sioux Park. The boring work to connect the poles in Bellamy campground has been completed. Due to the campground treeline creating signal issues, many connection points had to be hardwired.

Brian spoke with Lee from Quality Telecommunications, who identified a few trees in Riverside campground that may obstruct the signal. Staff have discussed potential solutions, including the possibility of setting an additional pole to avoid removing a tall spruce. A meeting is planned for next week to finalize the plan.

Some Wi-Fi point boxes have already been mounted to the poles. Bellamy is nearly complete, with only power installation remaining. However, a few parts needed for Riverside are backordered and not expected to arrive until December.

The system is expected to be fully operational by May 1st. Once completed, the service should be strong and reliable—an important improvement, as Little Sioux Park currently has the weakest cell phone reception of all the parks.

##### **2. Little Sioux Outlet Cleanout Update**

Brian reported that Brett from Johnston Excavating has completed Phase 1 of cleaning out the Little Sioux pond outlet. During the initial structure replacement, a cofferdam was installed using a large amount of Loess soil, which has made excavation more challenging. Fencing was installed today around the small ponds that were created during the process. The channel has now been fully cleaned out to a depth of approximately four feet, reaching down to sand and gravel. This is expected to help reopen any natural springs in the area.

Phase 2 will begin once the site has dried out. The excavated material will not be hauled off since it was a mix of sand, gravel and Loess soil. Instead, it will be mixed and incorporated onsite. The work was completed in about four hours, keeping the project under budget so

far. Dan noted that the cleaned-out channel should provide good fishing habitat for bluegills and other fish species.

### **3. FEMA Update**

Dan stated that the latest update from FEMA requires that a cultural study be done for both the boat ramp and the trail portion of the project, despite the trail area having already been previously disturbed. The cultural review is expected to take approximately one month to complete. Due to the delay, it will likely be too cold to pour concrete this season. Dan noted that an extension has been filed for the project. The request for the cultural review came from the tribal cultural officer because of concerns about erosion behind the project site. As a result, the projects will be postponed until spring. Brian mentioned that work on the boat ramp might still be possible during the winter, as it does not involve concrete, but this will depend on the contractor's availability and preference.

## **ITEM R5. Board Member/Staff Reports**

### **1. Administrative Items**

Dan reported on the following items:

#### **a. Set Next Meeting Date and Location**

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on December 11, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

#### **b. Budget Amendment FY25/26 Approval**

Dan reported that the Board of Supervisors approved a 6.5% increase to the employee hospitalization expense line item effective January 1, 2026. The budget director is preparing a budget amendment for FY26 to cover the increase. The amount applied to the conservation budget is \$8,046. Dan asked the board to acknowledge and approve the budget amendment.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Cindy.

To approve and acknowledge the FY 2025/2026 budget amendment for employee hospitalization expense in the amount of \$8,046.<sup>25-27</sup>

#### **VOTE:**

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth and Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling and Chris Zellmer-Zant

#### **c. Budget FY 26/27 Approval**

Dan requested final approval of the FY 26/27 operating budget, but he noted that he will review it one more time before submission to ensure nothing has been overlooked. The budget does not include salaries, as those figures have not yet been provided by the

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<sup>25-27</sup> To approve and acknowledge the FY 2025/2026 budget amendment for employee hospitalization expense in the amount of \$8,046.

Auditor's Office. However, the motor vehicle line item, which was cut last year, has been reinstated, along with the six seasonal positions that were previously removed.

Dan also shared updates from a department head meeting held earlier in the day. The Board of Supervisors allocated \$1 million to address the anticipated increase in health insurance costs. They acknowledged that implemental increases should have been implemented in prior years and have committed to reviewing insurance annually in July moving forward.

The county's health insurance plan has been reevaluated and expanded from two to four plan options. The premiums will vary depending on the plan selected by employees. The county will lose its grandfathered status (one of only two remaining in Iowa), but this change will allow the county to remain self-funded. Dan expressed concern about the impact this may have on the budgeting process. On a more positive note, Dan reported that the number of federal inmates has exceeded projections, and the daily fee may be increasing, which could help offset some budget pressures. Nonetheless, he anticipates that the upcoming fiscal year will continue to present budgetary challenges.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Cindy.

To approve the FY 2026/2027 operating budget as presented.<sup>25-28</sup>

**VOTE:**

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth and Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling and Chris Zellmer-Zant

**d. Needs Assessment Survey**

Dan expressed disappointment that the needs assessment survey was launched without notice to staff, preventing planned PR efforts prior to the launch. As of last week, only 27 responses were received out of 2,000 distributed. They are waiting to see how the response rate develops before mailing a hard copy, which will include a QR code also. A minimum of 400 responses is needed for a 90% confidence level in the results. To encourage participation, each submission will be entered into a drawing for a free cabin stay. Dan asked SIMPCO to delay mailing the hard copy as he plans to get some publicity through social media and possibly a feature in the newspaper. It was noted that the timing of the launch coinciding with the government shutdown may have negatively impacted engagement.

**e. Great Outdoors Foundation Projects**

Dan reported that the projects in collaboration with the Great Outdoors Foundation are progressing. He and Brian have been working closely with Bolton & Menk and the Foundation team. The Foundation has shown the most interest in the Owego project, though they need to confirm that the NRCS has no objections to increasing the basin size. The Foundation's primary focus is on water quality, particularly in light of the

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<sup>25-28</sup> To approve the FY 2026/2027 operating budget as presented.

environmental impact associated with Google's AI operations. Brian and Dan will be participating in a meeting on Wednesday to gather more information.

**f. Motus Bird Tracking Station, Sloan School**

Rich Pope, President of the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation Board, requested that the Woodbury County Conservation Board formally express its support for the installation of a Motus bird tracking station at the school in Sloan. The Motus system records data each time a tagged bird passes by the station, contributing to regional and international bird migration research. Similar stations are currently in place at Stone State Park and Broken Kettle Grasslands.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Cindy.

To confirm the Board's support for the installation of a Motus bird tracking station at the school in Sloan.<sup>25-29</sup>

**VOTE:**

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth and Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling and Chris Zellmer-Zant

**g. Southwood Cabin Rules Change**

A request was received from a horse user wishing to stay in a cabin and park their horse trailer nearby. Staff expressed concerns regarding the proximity of horses to the cabins, including issues such as horses being tied outside trailers, manure cleanup, and potential liability risks, such as the possibility of park visitors being kicked. Additionally, the cabins are located close together, and staff noted that there is already a designated area for horse trailer parking. By consensus, the board agreed to place this item on the consent agenda for next month for formal action.

**2. Board Information**

None

**3. Other Business**

None

**4. Old Business**

Dan reported that he has been working with the County Treasurer on the management of the Endowment Fund and REAP Fund. Historically, Endowment and REAP funds have been placed into a certificate of deposit (CD), which restricts access. With the current CD coming due, Dan requested that the REAP funds not be reinvested in a CD at this time, as the funds may be needed for upcoming projects.

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<sup>25-29</sup> To confirm the Board's support for the installation of a Motus bird tracking station at the school in Sloan.

In the past, interest earned from the Endowment CD was transferred into the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Fund. Dan is now working to have that interest redirected into the Endowment Fund instead. He recommended allowing the \$50,000 endowment and any accumulated interest to remain invested and continue to be reinvested automatically. Although the interest can be withdrawn at any time, Dan noted that allowing it to accumulate will yield greater returns over time. Formal action will be taken at the next meeting.

**ITEM R6. Director's Annual Review**

**MOTION** by Cindy, second by Neil at 5:15 p.m.

To enter a closed session pursuant to Iowa Code – Chapter 21.5(1)(a) for the purpose of conducting the Director's annual performance evaluation.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Neil Stockfleth – Aye, Cindy Bennett – Aye, Tom Limoges – Aye

The board discussed Director Heissel's performance for the past year and goals for the future. The session was recorded.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Cindy at 5:45 p.m.

To leave closed session pursuant to Iowa Code – Chapter 21.5(1)(a) for the purpose of conducting the Director's annual performance evaluation.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Neil Stockfleth – Aye, Cindy Bennett – Aye, Tom Limoges – Aye

**ITEM R7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

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Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

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Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

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Board Chair, Tom Limoges