

# Annual Report

## Woodbury County Conservation Board

July 1, 2022—June 30, 2023



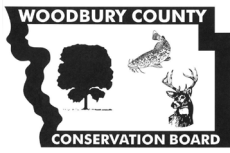


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# Woodbury County Conservation Board

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Board Members:  
Cindy Bennett  
Aaron Gehling  
Tom Limoges  
Neil Stockfleth  
Christine Zellmer-Zant

Daniel Heissel, Director  
Brian Stehr, Deputy Director  
Theresa Kruid, Education Director

## Executive Summary

**MISSION:** *Woodbury County Conservation Board is a regional agency tasked with providing high-quality and valuable education, recreation, enhancement, and preservation of our natural resources through professional and courteous service for the betterment of current and future generations.*

**WOODBURY COUNTY VISION:** *Woodbury County dedicates itself to providing high-quality services to meet the ever-changing demands and needs of its citizens.*

### FY 23 HIGHLIGHTS:

- \$5,000 Gilchrist Micro Grant for pumping water to Owego Wetland cells
- Replaced all AC Units at Snyder Bend with funding from the Supervisors
- \$1.2 million in ARPA money allocated for new sewer system at Little Sioux Park
- Tasers and body cameras purchased by Supervisors with ARPA money

### CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

- Manage 21 areas totaling 6,219 acres
- Hold and monitor 15 conservation easements on 1,695 acres
- Park revenues totaled \$280,560.95
- Over 50,000 visitors to Dorothy Pecaute Nature Center
- Staffed by 16 full-time, 4 regular part-time, and 25 seasonal employees

The Woodbury County Conservation Board is a five-member volunteer board appointed by the county Board of Supervisors. Members are appointed for five-year staggered terms. Meetings are scheduled for the second 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 while dovetailing with the County's Vision. The Woodbury County Conservation Board likes to partner with the County Board of Supervisors, the Iowa Natural Resources Department, and numerous local organizations described in Section IV of this report. We utilize feedback from our park users that we get from our comment cards available at our areas to help improve our facilities and services. Woodbury County is blessed with outstanding natural resource and outdoor recreation opportunities supported by its taxpayers. Please explore and enjoy your county park areas. You'll be glad you did!

Yours In Conservation,

Dan Heissel, Director



# WOODBURY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

## ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023

### I. BOARD ROSTER/MEETINGS

The conservation board members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors for five-year terms. Members serving in 2022 - 2023 were as follows:

<u>Meetings Attended</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Expiration Date</u>
9	Cindy Bennett	Member	December 31, 2028
11	Aaron Gehling	Member	December 31, 2027
12	Tom Limoges	Member	December 31, 2026
10	Chris Zellmer-Zant	Member	December 31, 2025
10	Neil Stockfleth	Chairperson	December 31, 2024

Jeremy Taylor is the Board of Supervisors Liaison to the Conservation Board and attends meetings when he is able.

The board held eleven regular monthly meetings during the fiscal year and one special meeting, for a total of 12 meetings. Minutes of these meetings are on file in the conservation office at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center and are available for viewing on our website [www.woodburyparks.org](http://www.woodburyparks.org).

#### OTHER MEETINGS ATTENDED

One staff member attended the 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of Iowa County Conservation Boards at Pottawattamie & Harrison County in September 2023. All eight of the department's law enforcement officers attended the County Conservation Peace Officers Association's annual law enforcement workshop in October 2023 at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy in Johnston, Iowa. Staff members assisted with a district conservation booth at the Clay County Fair in September 2023.

Additional meetings attended by employees and/or board members during the fiscal year included:

- Woodbury County Safety meeting
- Pesticide and Water Operator CEU training meetings
- Woodbury County Conservation Foundation meetings
- Woodbury County Health and Wellness Committee meetings
- Woodbury County Board of Supervisors meetings
- Woodbury County Soil and Water Conservation District meeting
- Grow Siouxland Committee meetings
- Loess Hills Alliance committee meetings
- Woodbury County REAP meeting
- IACCB District III meetings
- Pheasants Forever Chapter meetings
- Department Staff meetings

### II. ADMINISTRATION/MAINTENANCE

#### Staffing

Department staff during the fiscal year included sixteen full-time, four regular part-time, and 24 seasonal employees. Part-time senior aide positions through the Woodbury County Community Action Agency continued to provide valuable receptionist assistance while providing employment for previously retired individuals. Employment through this program is limited which can result in a new employee each year.

Numerous temporary seasonal employees were hired from April through October for maintenance tasks in the county park and wildlife areas.

The department's director, deputy director, three resource managers and three assistant resource managers are certified law enforcement officers who maintain their certification through the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA). 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.

Various employment programs, provided through a variety of other agencies in the community, help supplement board staffing needs when available. Conservation Corps Iowa (CCI), the AmeriCorps program through the Minnesota Conservation Corps, was contracted to work a total of 11 days during the fiscal year. CCI crews comprising up to five persons came one week during this fiscal year. The crew that showed up worked on removing and cleaning up brush and trees on the Briese north fence line.

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 fundraiser event utilizes over 70 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, 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 or promoted throughout the fiscal year were as follows:

- (1) Executive Director
- (1) Deputy Director
- (3) Resource Manager
- (3) Assistant Resource Manager
- (3) Resource Technician
- (1) Office Manager
- (1) Part-Time Office Clerk
- (9) Seasonal Park Ranger
- (1) Education Programs Director
- (2) Naturalist
- (1) GIS/Resource Technician
- (2) Nature Center Receptionist
- (1) Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator
- (5) Summer Intern Naturalist
- (2) Part-Time AmeriCorps Naturalist
- (7) Security Guard
- (8) Seasonal Park Maintenance Employee
- (1) Habitat Stewardship Intern

This breaks down to 16 full-time employees, 4 part-time employees, and up to 24 seasonal employees if all positions are filled. The number of seasonal employees listed represents the various persons hired to fill these positions and may vary depending on funding and need and availability of qualified candidates.

### **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:

<b><u>Grants Submitted</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>\$ Requested</u></b>	<b><u>\$ Awarded</u></b>
MHRD Grant	Shelter – Nature Center	\$15,000	\$15,000

Conservation staff continues to seek grant dollars and leverage available funds to assist with major development projects, land acquisition, publicity, and environmental education. **During FY23, a total of \$15,000 in grants was received and administered.**

## **Long-Range Planning**

Long-range strategic planning is a very important responsibility of the board. Long-range planning needs to be addressed to maintain focus and purpose by the board and an efficient, effective, and responsive department. Long-range planning was changed this year and was done during the summer when the board met in the parks. We held long-range planning just with staff from that district and area and had more one-on-one time with staff about the areas they manage. This has been working out great, and we will continue to do it in the future. This makes prioritizing projects a lot easier when it comes to funding.

## **Board Policies**

Board policies are reviewed annually and addressed when needs arise. The conservation board coordinates department policies closely with other county policies and procedures. The deputy director, who serves as the chief law enforcement officer for the department, worked with the Sheriff's Department to incorporate many of the Sheriff's Department policies into a new Law Enforcement Policy for the conservation department which was adopted by the board.

## **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 can 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 eight law enforcement officers attended various training and certification classes at the Law Enforcement Academy. The annual County Safety Meeting for Secondary Roads and Conservation employees was held in November, and field staff were able to attend and receive training on chainsaws, bloodborne pathogens, and general safety practices.

The Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards annual conference was held at Pottawattamie in September 2023. Nine 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. All full-time staff maintain CPR, AED, and Basic First Aid certification, and recertification classes were attended during the year.

## **Committees/Appointments**

The education programs director served as a delegate from Woodbury County to the Loess Hills Alliance Board of Directors. The deputy director served on the Habitat and Executive Committees for the Woodbury County Chapter of Pheasants Forever. The director served on the Woodbury County Health and Wellness Committee and the statewide Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant Scoring 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. Director Dan Heissel and Dawn Snyder, along with board member, Christine Zellmer-Zant, served 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 and 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, firefighting 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. The Soil & Water Conservation District provides trees every year for kids in grade school.

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. 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 participates with the DNR's water quality monitoring program on its two swimming beaches.

The board continued to work on partnerships and agreements with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation regarding conservation easements and with 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 many 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 is in place between the conservation board and Secondary Roads. The conservation department must also maintain a close working relationship with the Sheriff's Office. Conservation law enforcement officers depend heavily on Sheriff's Deputies to assist with problems that arise in the parks and any subsequent arrests. In turn, the Sheriff's office utilizes our officers when they need help in the rural areas. Sometimes our officers are the closest backup they may have. The Sheriff's Office assisted with updating the board's Law Enforcement Policy and with researching specific equipment for department officers.

A more detailed description of various cooperative ventures is discussed in **Section V** 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. The board's website, [www.woodburyparks.org](http://www.woodburyparks.org), provides a multitude of information for visitors and is updated regularly by staff. Information on cabin and enclosed shelter rental dates 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 cabin and enclosed shelter reservations entered the electronic age when they went "online" through MyCountyParks.com website December 23, 2016. All four park offices are connected to the internet and the county's Outlook email and main "U" drive which provides an efficient method of information exchange with the main office. Most full-time staff have opted to receive and access their work email on their personal cell phones. It is 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. Fiber optic service has been installed at Southwood Conservation Area.

The board continued to provide two outlets for the public to obtain DNR licenses at Little Sioux Park and Southwood Conservation Area. These outlets are part of the DNR's electronic licensing system that has been operating since 2000, and these systems were upgraded in 2010. All IDNR licenses are also available online.

The board also has a drone, and staff uses it heavily for management purposes. Staff also fly projects for the County Engineer's office assisting them with photos and videos they need of projects.

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 website provides excellent access for all county conservation boards in Iowa to promote their areas and facilities to potential visitors across the country. The board has its own website [www.woodburyparks.org](http://www.woodburyparks.org) that promotes our areas as well.

### **Environmental Education/Publicity**

The board's environmental education program continued to experience strong demand for programs and information every 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 can 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. Staff conducted numerous radio and television interviews concerning various programs and events during the fiscal year. The board cooperated



with the Woodbury County Soil Conservation District in providing trees to fifth graders in rural school districts throughout the county. The director, several resource managers, naturalists, and the deputy director 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. 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 VIII**.

The board provided educational programs at the Woodbury County Fair. Staff also assisted with a District III County Conservation booth at the Clay County Fair.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Nature Calls fundraiser was held in September of this year. Please see reports under the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center later in this report for more information.

### **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 resumed. Communication efforts among staff locations have been enhanced with the use of e-mail, high-speed internet, and cell phones.

### **Equipment**

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:

	<b><u>Item</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>
1	2023 Chevy 1500 Crew Cab	\$35,109
1	2023 Bobcat T770 Track Loader	\$89,751
1	14 foot Aluminum Trailer	\$4,520
1	2023 Kubota F2690 Front Deck Mower	\$21,000
1	2022 Ford F-250 Extended Cab	<u>\$25,816</u>
		\$176,196

A total of \$176,196 was spent on this equipment. A complete equipment inventory is on file in the conservation office. Our order for a 2023 Ram 3500 Flatbed truck (\$53,415) was cancelled, allowing us to carry over funds and is the difference in our bottom-line total for motor vehicles purchased. We normally have \$130,000 budgeted.

**Law Enforcement Equipment** – This year the conservation department was able to purchase tasers and body cameras with the Sheriff's Office through the Supervisors using ARPA Funds. The conservation department would have been unable to purchase these without the ARPA Funds. This provides another layer of safety and accountability for our eight (8) officers.

## **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. **Section VII** of this report describes various capital improvement projects for each prospective area. 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 are to be monitored and adjusted periodically to ensure a competitive product and price, but these revenues will need to be supplemented with additional sources. Long-range planning must be an ongoing effort by the conservation board and staff and should include the Board of Supervisors in dealing with particularly costly projects. 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. Some major projects, such as road resurfacing, are simply out of the conservation board's ability to repay and will need to be funded by bonds issued through the Board of Supervisor's Debt Service Fund. The Iowa Outdoor Natural Resources Trust Fund can be a significant source of revenue when it is funded.

### **Land Acquisition**

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 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 V**, 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 local colleges and universities, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Whitetails Unlimited, Sioux Valley Sports Club, 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, 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. The Sheriff's Department provides critical assistance to park officers in law enforcement situations and the conservation officers return the favor with backing up deputies when needed or requested. It is imperative that these types of relationships continue among departments.

### **Priorities/Strategic Planning**

The board's policies and long-range plans will continue to be reviewed and updated as necessary. Future planning efforts will assist in developing the board's budget requests, and a strategic planning meeting of the board needs to be held annually. The board is currently holding strategic planning sessions in the summer when they have board meetings out in the park. After every board meeting, they hold strategic planning with

staff from that park and district and go through long-range planning. This seems to work out well and will continue. The board can get more one-on-one input from staff in those areas. 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 and has helped tremendously in dealing with retirements from key positions.

### **Staff**

Full-time conservation staff numbers have been insufficient for many years. Optimally, the department should have a minimum of three additional full-time positions to operate most efficiently and responsively to the public. Discussion of additional staff continues to be addressed through strategic planning and communication with the Board of Supervisors with overall county budget concerns being the limiting factor. Priorities for full-time staff positions include a natural resources coordinator. 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. Position requests have been favorably received by the Board of Supervisors, but budget constraints have not allowed many positions to be added. In 2023 the Supervisors approved the addition of a resource technician position for our department. This position had been asked for in the past and was finally filled. This position goes to Southwood, making every district now have a Resource Manager, Assistant Resource Manager, and a Resource Technician on staff. This has really changed things for staff and how they operate. 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 as they handle various park duties, and staff will continue to seek individuals willing to serve in that capacity. The board annually recognizes 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 with 36 acres and the Dorothy Pecaute Nature Center/Board Office area at Stone Park with 10 acres. The board also operates two areas under management agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Copeland Park Access on the Little Sioux River west of Correctionville at the State Highway #31 bridge and Meyer Access, a river access site on the Little Sioux River near the D-50 bridge south of Anthon. The Bigelow Park management agreement was renewed as a 50-year management lease agreement in 2010.

### **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. Wildlife food plots were planted on public wildlife areas. Controlled prairie burns for grassland improvement, as well as seed production, were done by staff. Staff cooperated with the Woodbury County Pheasants Forever Chapter in providing free seed for establishing food plots on public and private lands and handed out corn, sorghum and beans food plot seed.

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 seven 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. 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. The board assists the Secondary Roads Department with seeding various road shouldering, re-grading, 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 are maintained on the north shore of Brown's Lake and east shore of Snyder Bend Lake. Other non-game efforts include a variety of programs offered to the public. Representatives from the Waterfowl Association of Iowa have assisted with installing nesting structures at Owego Wetland Complex.

In the summer of 2018, staff were able to get four swans in for Little Sioux Park where they had fenced off a special pen that has an aerator and a self-feeder. This has become a very popular attraction for park users.

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 is 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.

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 currently maintains a zero balance. The conservation board has designated Owego Wetland Complex as their main priority for expenditure of any SEP funds.

5. Naturalist Programs

Please refer to **Section VIII - 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 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. 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 1,281 acres of additional wildlife habitat areas in the county with help in purchasing the Zook, Briese, and Salsness parcels. In the spring of 2022, the Pheasants Forever (PF) Chapter and conservation staff cooperated in providing sorghum 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 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 designated 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 utilizes the assistance of the Heritage Foundation when they need to acquire a parcel that goes to auction or is being sold by a realtor. The advantages the foundation provides includes 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 conservation 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 hills 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 Christine Zellmer-Zant, conservation board member, 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.

#### 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.

For the 2023 fiscal year, \$12 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 2023 fiscal year, Woodbury County spent approximately 39 cents per thousand dollars of taxable valuation on conservation programs. During the fiscal year, Woodbury County received \$7,776 for its per county share and \$26,159 for its per capita share from REAP for a total of \$33,935 deposited into the REAP account.

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 acquisitions and capital improvement grant projects if necessary. 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 existing REAP funds will be used to assist with land acquisitions by matching grants used to purchase property

#### 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. 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. Staff will continue to work with this organization to promote their efforts in enhancing wildlife habitat and populations in the county. A \$5,000 grant was submitted in 2021 for the Salsness property and was received from the National Turkey Federation.

### V. LAND ACQUISITION

Easements, river accesses, and expansion of existing areas 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. Most all the time we are approached by landowners to see if we are interested in purchasing their property.

At the end of the fiscal year, the conservation board managed 23 different areas comprising approximately 6,459 acres and held fifteen conservation easements on over 1,695 acres that they monitor yearly with private landowners.



## 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, two open shelters, 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.

This year we had issues with the AC units in two of the four cabins. It was determined the units were at the end of their life span and repair was not possible as parts weren't available. All four units were replaced in August of 2022, and the Supervisors covered the costs using gambling dollars as a source of funds.

### 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 shelter house 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.



This popular area experienced strong visitation numbers and an increase in camping and visitation during the fiscal year with an estimated 165,000 visitors.

The concession stand was completed and was opened in July with rentals of paddle boats, canoes, kayaks and stand-up paddle boards. Inside a variety of ice cream bars, candy, pop, and ice was sold.





The park roads, as well as the campground road, were replaced with concrete and the campground remodeled adding water and sewer hook-ups to all sites. The new design features 29 sites. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 19 of the 29 sites were opened to the public. The other 10 sites had some grass that didn't come in well and were left closed until the grass filled in and staff felt that the grass could handle the traffic on it.



### 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 were 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 shelter house, 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 immediate concern for this park is the condition of the park asphalt roads. The 2.2 miles of asphalt have reached the end of life expectancy after 20 years and need to be resurfaced or renovated soon. Longer-range plans include renovation of Bellamy Campground, addition of playground equipment near the beach, replacement of playground surfacing material, asphalt road repairs, and development of the Peters Pit area. Little Sioux Park generated the largest amount of revenue during 2022-2023 and continued to be busy. New and renovated facilities continue to attract more users, and the Union Bridge trail continues to be extremely popular with park users and Correctionville citizens. Camping numbers rebounded well in 2023 with an increase of visitation.

Supervisors have allocated \$800,000 in ARPA Funds to go towards the new septic system needed in the park. Bidding and work won't begin until the next fiscal year. In April, Dan was able to secure another \$289,000 in ARPA Funding to go towards the sewer project making a total of \$1,089,000 available for the project, which will include sewer hookups to all sites in Riverside campground and a new sewage septic system to handle all the needs of the park. Future expansions were figured into the new system so it could handle these loads as well.

Clearing of trees to NW of the pond was done by a contractor in October. The area was the old tent camping area where most of it had been shut down due to liability concerns with dead cottonwoods etc. The board decided to clear this area and get it level and then discuss what to do with it through



the long-range planning session with staff. The ideas are additional campsites, long-term seasonal camping, possible cabins, along with more tent campsites. The site will be leveled again after it goes through a frosting period and then black dirt will be spread over the top. We have black dirt stockpiled from the graveling operation to the north of the park being done by Secondary Roads.

Swans were moved this summer to a DNR site as the water level was too low at Little Sioux to sustain them in the end they were enclosed. Once water levels come back to normal the DNR will bring the swans back to the park.

#### 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 were 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. Staff worked with a local architectural firm to look at plans for enclosing the open shelter, but cost estimates were prohibitive.

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 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. Most 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, a boat launching area and dock, modern restroom and shower building, maintenance shop/office and storage area, and a residence.

This park provides equestrian trails and campsites, and a group of volunteers with the Back Country Horsemen frequent the park and conduct many trail improvements. Native grass seed harvest operations were headquartered at Southwood Conservation Area where seed is cleaned, dried, and stored.

This area is a popular destination for people who enjoy large, undeveloped open spaces that still have access to basic amenities. It is also a popular spot for equestrian users, hunters, and campers. Cabin reservations are expected to have a big impact on visitation in the future, and the demand may require additional cabins. It is estimated that at least 45,000 people visited this conservation area during the fiscal year.

Liam Bell was hired at Southwood for the new Resource Technician position that was funded by the Supervisors. This was a new position we had been asking for. Now every district has a technician position. He is to start on July 10<sup>th</sup> of the new 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. New parking signs along the public roads were installed to direct users to specific parking lots. This area is open for public hunting and provides good opportunities for a large variety of upland game species and contains a nice farm pond for pan fish species.

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.

In September of this year, the conservation board was approached by the University of Iowa's Geological department to drill a monitoring well at Midway Park to monitor the aquifers in the area. Their original well outside of Merville had failed. The Board agreed to let them drill the well.

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. Dixon Access

In 2018, the conservation board reached a verbal agreement with Secondary Roads on the management of a boat access 2 miles south of Anthon off Hwy 31, east on Morgan Trail where a bridge had been removed. The ROW is still owned by Secondary Roads, but the conservation board will be managing the boat ramp. In the fall of 2017, the conservation board poured cement over top of rip rap to have a concrete ramp for better access.

10. Inkpaduta River Access

In February 1989, the board obtained a two-acre river access by easement. 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.

District III is going after state designation for this water trail which will allow for funding for signage and promotion.

11. 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.

12. 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. The area features a concrete boat ramp access to the river.

13. 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 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, 315 acres in 2007, and the Zook addition of 82.5 acres in 2019. The area is located between Oto and Smithland and presently consists of four separate units totaling 2,164.5 acres. The project is partially funded over nine years with a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program grant through the Natural Resource Conservation Service and was completed in 2016. Prescribed burns were not conducted during the year. This area contains several CRP contracts expiring soon.

The Board was able to purchase the Zook parcel that sits along the south edge of Unit One when it became available in June of 2019 with the help of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation at public auction. The INHF was able to purchase the 82.5 acres, and the board entered into a repurchase agreement and paid it off with a Habitat Stamp Grant in the spring of 2021.

The 240-acre Salsness parcel became available, and the conservation board was able to secure it with the help of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in 2021. Staff received a REAP grant in December of 2021 to purchase from the INHF.

The dam was repaired with funds from a Hungry Canyons Grant that paid for 85% of the project. Secondary Roads helped with the planning, design, and application of the Hungry Canyons Grant since they are the entity on record as a member of Hungry Canyons. This is another example of cooperation between county departments that is crucial.

Future plans include construction of a new watershed structure near County Road D-54 and removal of remaining interior fences. Existing native prairie areas, as well as wooded areas, will be rejuvenated through controlled burns. The board will consider grazing in certain areas as a potential

management tool. 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.

14. Owego Wetland Complex

This 1,330-acre area is 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. New cement pads for the pump were poured at each well head to make it easier to attach and level the pump which is a portable unit on wheels powered by a diesel motor.

A Gilchrist Micro Grant of \$5,000 was received for the pumping and this allowed us to pump 42,816,400 gallons into the cells filling most of the cells with water for the fall migration. Water held throughout the fall until freeze up.



15. Administrative Offices/Dorothy Peca Nature Center

The Dorothy Peca 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 and Nature Scape Playground.

The nature center was featured as one of Sioux City's "jewels" in a community perception review presentation by consultant Roger Brooks in 2016. Particularly noted was the welcoming signage and staff. The trails on each side of the nature center were surfaced with concrete, as well as the trail from the water feature out to the landscape. All of these were poured to ADA access.

It was a busy year at the Nature Center as several projects were added. Security cameras were installed, both inside and outside, as well as a license plate camera and regular cameras in the lower lot to try to reduce crime. The Supervisors funded \$5,000 of the \$13,000 cost, and the rest was taken from the Nature Center maintenance fund. The ground west of the parking lot and north of the gardens was built up with soil to a higher level, a retaining wall poured, fenced and a picnic shelter installed, making that area more useable and a place to gather. This was made possible by a grant from MRHD for \$15,000 and a donation made to the conservation board. While in the process, the board also allowed staff to expand and enlarge the upper gravel parking lot to hold more cars.

A dog waterer and drinking fountain was installed on the east side of the Nature Center and was made possible by donations from private individuals. Floor settling issues were discovered inside the nature center. Building Services got involved, and architects and engineers have been investigating the problem and will be making recommendations in the future on what to do to remedy the problem.









Dawn Snyder, Education Director for 34 years, announced her retirement for late January of 2023. The Director began the replacement process with the board, and after interviews, our own Theresa Kruid was hired to replace Dawn. Theresa has been with the board for 26 years as Naturalist and moves into the role of Education Director. Staff will soon advertise and hire for a naturalist position as her replacement.



16. 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.

A 120-acre addition adjacent to the south side of this property was acquired in October 2016 and dedicated on November 12<sup>th</sup> at the site. The Upper Sioux Community Tribal Historic Preservation Officer was contracted to conduct a cultural resources survey which was completed in April 2017.

17. 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 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.

Additional sections of fence will be replaced or constructed to control unauthorized traffic and delineate property boundaries. 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.

18. Peters Pit

Peters Pit was doubled in size by an agreement between the Secondary Roads Department and the Woodbury County Conservation Board. The Engineers department would get all the gravel and would leave 500 tons of road gravel behind for use of the conservation department. Work has been done to level and seed the area, and it will be open for fishing and picnicking.



19. Izaak Walton League

The Conservation Board was approached by Rick Cerwick, President of the Iowa Division of Izaak Walton League, to see if we were interested in purchasing the one-acre property along with the existing building. The property has 300 feet of shoreline along with one acre of property and the old club house for the local Izaak Walton League Chapter. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) stepped in and handled all the negotiations and purchased the property for \$75,000. The conservation board has applied for a Gilchrist Grant in the amount of \$80,000 to cover the purchase and closing costs. We should find out in August of the next fiscal period if we receive it. This will be reported in the next Annual Report of FY 23-24.

## VIII. DOROTHY PECAUT NATURE CENTER



### **Annual Report July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023**

**Woodbury County  
Conservation Board  
4500 Sioux River Road  
Sioux City, IA 51109-1657  
712-258-0838**

**<https://www.woodburyparks.org>**



## Highlights



- Dawn Snyder, Education Programs Director retired February 2, 2023. Snyder had worked with WCCB for nearly 34 years. Snyder was Woodbury County's first naturalist, started a very successful education program, instrumental in the Nature Center project, and a good leader for staff and the community.

- Theresa Kruid, Naturalist, was promoted to Education Director and has over 25 years of experience with WCCB. Kari Sandage was also promoted to Naturalist I after an interview process. The search for our Naturalist II position began.

- Visitation and programming continue to be our focus. Summer camps were filled with waiting lists. Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 field trip seasons were extremely busy. Our public programs and events were well attended. Wildlife Encounters, Coffee & Conservation Programs, Meet a Screech Owl, Outdoor Yoga, and Monarch Tagging were some of the favorite public programs.

- WCCF and DPNC hosted Wildlife Encounters program in February 2023 with nearly 200 people attending. Wildlife Encounters is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public about the natural environment and offers homes to animals in need. Their educator, Jillian brought a joey Kangaroo, young alligator, a kinkajou, 9-banded armadillo, and Maccaw.



- The Annual Nature Calls Fundraiser in September 2022 was held at the Sioux City Convention Center with 580 people in attendance. This was the 18<sup>th</sup> annual event. The net profit from the event totaled \$31,694.11.

- WCCB received funding for a quarter time AmeriCorps member (450 hours). This is the fourth year WCCB has been awarded AmeriCorps funds. The 2022-2023 quarter time member Grace Perrin began in May 2023 to assist with summer and youth programming.

- WCCF provided funds for one seasonal naturalist and a 4-member Conservation Corps of Iowa crew to provide habitat restoration on the prairie ridges at the Nature Center.



- An outdoor Learning Shelter was installed off the parking lot of the Nature Center. This was made possible from the Karen Juhl bequest, MRHD & BNSF grants, CF Industries donation, Siouxland Big Give donations, and private donations.

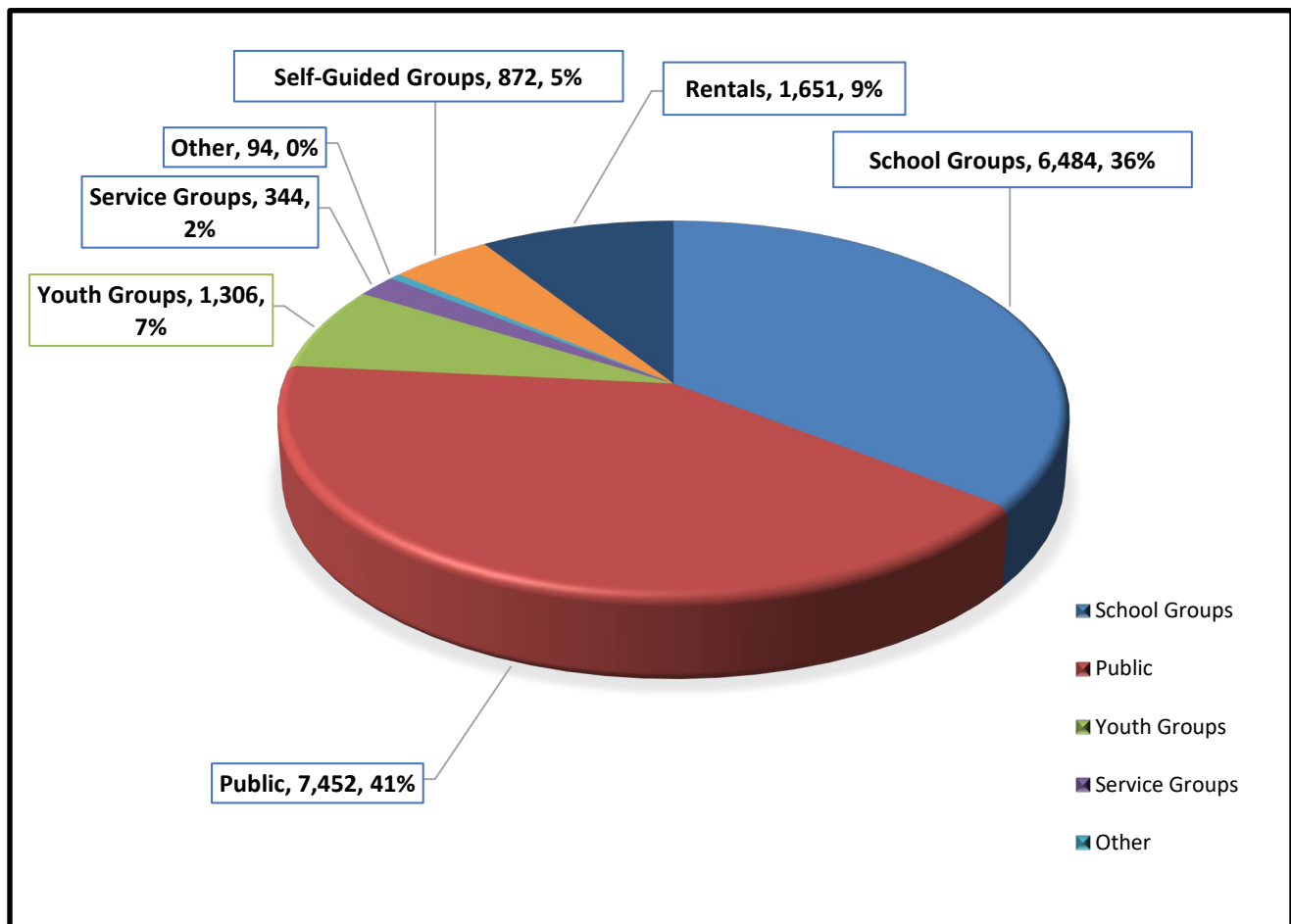
- Fall Fest 2022 hosted the Iowa State University Insect Zoo with 340 attendees. They brought a variety of local and exotic insects and arthropods.

- In May, we hosted a picnic social to celebrate our volunteers and honor Karen South, Conservation Educator and Mark Peterson, Friend of Conservation. We grilled, played yard games, and enjoyed a beautiful evening outdoors with volunteers and staff.



## 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. Community partnership programs included Ponca Expo School Day, Celebrate Siouxland, and the Woodbury County Fair.



## 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. We offered 136 public programs and 7,452 people attended. We offered a new series Coffee & Conservation for adults starting in December 2022. Popular programs included youth kayaking, Meet the Animals, Music Around the Campfire, and Nature Tales, Native Plant programs, and Yoga classes. The highlights of the year were the ISU Insect Zoo and Wildlife Encounters. The Insect Zoo brought a variety of native and exotic insects, spiders and other arthropods and reached 340 people. Wildlife Encounters is non-profit group from Gretna, NE. Their educator brought in exotic animals and nearly 200 people attended the two sessions. A kangaroo, armadillo, kinkajou, and alligator were some of the favorites they brought. The WCCF co-sponsored Wildlife Encounters and this was offered for their annual meeting in February 2023.



**School Groups:** DPNC is a field trip site for preschool through college students. The Center's staff provides resources, materials, and curriculum supplements for teachers to enhance the learning process of their students. Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 field trip seasons were very busy, and we saw a sizable increase from the previous year.



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 tristate area. Our direct school programs increased to over 6,400 youth through 125 programs. Self-guided school visits to the Nature Center reached 872 students in the last year. We have been increasing the number of county school visits reached and made great connections with Woodbury Central and Westwood school districts.

**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 tristate area use our facility for meetings, classes, and field studies.

**Youth Camps & Programs:** The DPNC has offered Summer Day Camps since 1997 reaching nearly 300 children annually. In 2022, we offered 17 camps reaching over 230 children ages 3 to 12 years of age. Summer Naturalist interns and AmeriCorps Naturalist members provide vital assistance, teaching of our summer camps and programs. They offered a variety of programs including live animal presentations, youth fishing, youth canoeing and kayaking, and trail hikes.

On-site programming is available for schools, youth, civic and community groups throughout the year. Staff utilize materials within our teaching collection and live reptiles and raptors. Native American Youth,





ESL youth, scouts, 4-H groups, community libraries, and others often request special programs from our staff. We reached over 1,000 youth during our programs this year, mostly attributed to the summer programming by our seasonal naturalists and AmeriCorps naturalist.



**Service-Learning Groups/Volunteers:** GIS Resource Technician Tyler Flammang had the opportunity to work with multiple service groups over the last year including business, church, school and scout groups. Service groups worked on trail maintenance, landscaping, roadside cleanup, and prairie rescue. This offers a good opportunity for people to help their community and learn about their natural areas at the same time. Volunteers assisted with a large variety of tasks including gardening, office assisting, and program help.

**Service Group Programs:** Programming is also offered for groups, such as Garden Clubs, Sertoma Clubs, Rotary, etc. throughout the year. A total of 344 people was reached through these meetings.

**Casual Visitors:** DPNC is open to the public 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Tuesday through Saturday and closed Sunday and Monday. Areas of interest include hiking trails through native prairie and woodlands, wildlife viewing area, interpretive displays including an interactive badger in a tunnel under the prairie diorama, working beehive, a 400-gallon native fish aquarium, resident education animals, and butterfly and herb gardens. The Raptor House and Nature Playscape brings in additional visitors. An estimated 20,096 people visited the Nature Center last year. We know more people visit than are counted and this number could be significantly higher.

### **Grants:**

The DPNC and WCCF applied for four grants during this period, receiving a total of \$11,000.00. Total amount requested was \$16,000.00.

<b><u>Grants July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023</u></b>	<b><u>Amount requested</u></b>	<b><u>Amount received</u></b>	<b><u>Project Targeted</u></b>
AmeriCorps 4-H EE	Quarter Time member	Quarter Time member (\$1,950 match)	Environmental Ed programs
BNSF Railway	\$10,000.00	\$5,000.00	Nature Center Outdoor Learning Shelter
CF Industries	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	Screech Owl Aviary
Loess Hills Audubon Society	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	Screech Owl Aviary
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$16,000.00</b>	<b>\$11,000.00</b>	

## **Nature Center**

**Resource Management and Maintenance:** This year's projects began with Tyler Flammang's training and education in ArcGIS Pro. The DPNC trail map was updated, and various online training was utilized to expand mapping possibilities.



Construction projects are expected, and this year saw many. One of the first was the replacement of the fence bordering the parking lot, next to the shop. This fence had been in a state of decline for years, but due to the vegetation, no one would have known it. Further inspection revealed that the vegetation had broken many pickets as the vines weaved their way through the structure. Additionally, several rails, the supports the pickets connect to, had been wedged apart from the posts as vines increased in diameter.

Major physical and financial support for this project was provided by CF Industries. A generous donation of \$5,000 from CF provided the materials and CF employees volunteered their time to assist with installation.

The following photos show the before and after construction of the fence project.







The major project of the year centered around the installation of an open shelter, located next to and west of the parking lot. Before this shelter could be constructed, major earthmoving needed to take place. WCCB staff was tasked with filling and leveling the area where the shelter was to be built. While completing this phase of the project, it was discovered that the gravel parking area along the driveway should be raised as well to provide a more cohesive and usable space between the shelter and the parking.

A poured retaining wall to support the area surrounding the shelter was completed by a contractor. WCCB staff was tasked with backfilling the wall and final grading around the shelter. Shelter construction was completed by the same contractor who poured the retaining wall and concrete pad for the shelter. This outdoor learning shelter project was made possible by the Karen Juhl bequest, MRHD & BNSF grants, CF Industries donation, Siouxland Big Give donations, and private donations. This shelter will serve as a picnic space for visitors and school groups and as outdoor education space. Our Nature Tales public program and Summer Camps used this space in the summer of 2023.





Other minor projects included the installation of smaller items purchased through grants and donations. An outdoor dog-friendly water fountain was installed near the building. It has been well received, and many visitors appreciate the access to water outside the building.

**Trails:** The trails provide a great interpretive asset for programs and a wonderful recreational option for park visitors. Ongoing trail maintenance involves spreading woodchips, repairs to stairs, clearing fallen trees, fixing washouts, leveling trails, and trash removal. Volunteers assist us with many of these tasks.

The Tale Trail project that was installed in spring 2022 has continued to receive book donations from multiple donors. These stories are changed every two to four weeks to provide visitors a different self-guided experience while enjoying the outdoors.

An informational kiosk is located at each trailhead and provides information on the trails, plant identification and natural history information. Student interns provide temporary display information for each of the kiosks.



**Prairie Rescue:** In October 2022, a Conservation Corps of Iowa crew spent a week focusing on the land around our Kestrel Point overlook and the ridge descending from it. The crew cleared black raspberry, dogwood, and greenbrier from this steep ridge. They also were able to remove or girdle ash, hackberry, ironwood and elm trees to open this space and increase the sunlight for the prairie plants. The long-term effects of this project, play into the WCCB's goal of restoring the ridges around the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center to their unique high, dry, and open state. Through the continual land management practices of prescribed fire, mechanized mowing, and hand clearing operations, the special species of forbs and grasses that can only

grow in these last remaining pockets of the Loess Hills will hopefully survive and thrive for years to come.

**Trees:** WCCB and Woodbury County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) partners to bring trees to 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Woodbury Co. SWCD coordinates the program and distributes the trees to participating Woodbury County school districts. WCCB cost-shares this program at 50/50 cost. Naturalist, Kari Sandage, assisted with programs at several schools and assisted with distribution of the trees.



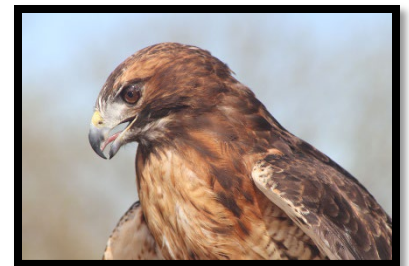
**Exhibits:** DPNC received a big bluestem root bundle from the Tallgrass Prairie Center through their grant process. We worked with Brown Knows Designs exhibit company to add the root bundle to the existing prairie diorama. Having the actual plant roots for visitors to see allows them to truly understand how deep the grasses grow into the ground as well as how tall they grow above ground.

A tree aviary is in the design process to house our newly acquired Screech Owl. This root bundle and the owl aviary were funded by a Gilchrist Foundation grant and private donations.



**Animal Ambassadors & Raptor Enclosure:** DPNC houses three snakes, four box turtles, a salamander and three raptors that are educational ambassadors. The animals are used for educational programs for schools, youth, camps, and the public. In the past year, they were used for over 220 programs reaching over 15,000 participants. These animals help make connections to the natural world and assist in getting our message to the community.

The Raptor House is a highlight for many visitors and allows them an up close and personal experience with animals that are otherwise distant and elusive. Our live educational raptors outdoors include Scarlet, a Red-tailed Hawk and Harlan, a Barred Owl. All birds were acquired from Kay Neumann, director of a non-profit raptor rehabilitation & education facility called Saving Our Avian Resources (SOAR). These birds are on permanent display which allows visitors to learn more about raptors. Unfortunately, Scarlet, our Red-tail Hawk, passed in April 2023. We estimate she was at least 25 years old.



Lucia, an Eastern Screech Owl, joined our team after an injury earlier in the year. She was found in Stone State Park and has a permanent wing injury. She also suffered from a severe concussion that took months to heal. An aviary is being designed for her by Brown Knows Designs.

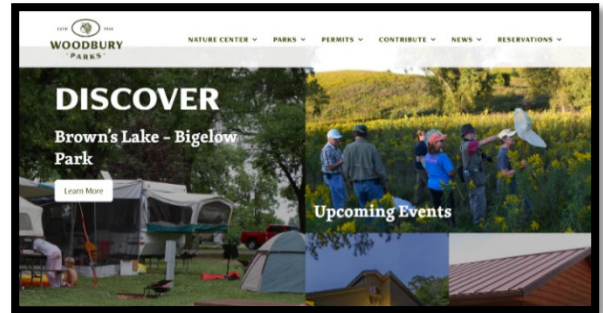
## Marketing

A positive relationship is maintained with local media. The naturalists participated in many interviews for radio, television, and newspaper during the past year. The education team collaborated with Iowa PBS to create a new FIND Iowa (Fun Investigating New Discoveries). Woodbury County/Sioux City was one of three urban schools participating in the statewide project.

**Woodbury Wanderings Newsletter:** Our newsletter has transitioned to an online only format. Bi-monthly to monthly versions of the newsletter are emailed with MailChimp. Programming and project information is shared through this format. Interested subscribers are encouraged to request their newsletter online.

**Web Page:** <<https://www.woodburyparks.org>>

The improved website is more streamlined and includes an interactive map of our park areas, beautiful photos, updated information, video clips of the cabins, shelters and nature center and the ability to donate online to the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation.



**Social Media:** We use Facebook and Instagram daily to share information and events. Naturalist, Kari Sandage coordinates this. Our Facebook page is updated live on the main page of the website, to attract new users. DPNC added a TikTok page and the 2022 summer interns provided content for that. Our YouTube page is used to post educational videos and share that content. We have not added regularly since 2020 but it serves as a place to document our videos. Facebook remains the top way for us to announce events, programs and general information.

**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. We had 71 total groups use the facility for a total of 1,651 people.

**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 items from local artists such as handmade cards and jewelry. All proceeds from the shop go to the Nature Center.



**Staff:** DPNC has seven staff dedicated to the operation and programs of the facility. Dawn Snyder serves as Nature Center Education Programs Director and Head Naturalist and holds a BS degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from Iowa State University. She has more than 38 years of experience in the interpretation field, with 27 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 Loess Hills Alliance Executive Board. Snyder announced her retirement plans in the Fall of 2022. Her last day with WCCB was February 2, 2023.

Theresa Kruid, Naturalist, has been with WCCB/DPNC for 26 years. She has more than 30 years of experience in the interpretation field and holds a BS degree in Recreation and Park Management (Environmental Interpretation and Outdoor Education emphasis) from Pennsylvania State University. Kruid developed DPNC's successful summer day camp program that continues to grow each year, as well as organizes annual program events, a multitude of school programs and field trips and oversees the care of our animal ambassadors. Kruid was promoted to Education Director following Snyder's retirement.

Kari Sandage began as a full-time naturalist in October 2020. She has a BA degree in Environmental Studies and Spanish from Central College and a MS degree in Environmental



Science (emphasis in Conservation Biology) from Antioch University New England. She has 7 years of experience in the interpretation field. Sandage was promoted to Naturalist I in late February 2023.

The Naturalist II position was advertised, and interviews were held but the position was not filled in this fiscal year.

Tyler Flammang, Geographical Information System (GIS) Technician, has 8 years of experience at WCCB. He has an associate degree from Western Iowa Tech Community College. His duties include GIS mapping, resource management, building, and grounds maintenance. Flammang continues to be integral part of special events, seasonal employee training, building projects and mapping for our trails.

DPNC Support staff includes 2 part-time receptionists, Pam Pfautsch (27 years) and Dorothy Shamblen (new hire June 15, 2022) and a Part-time Volunteer Coordinator/Receptionist, Betty West (15 years). These women are vital to the success of DPNC.

In 2022, WCCB received funding from the 4-H AmeriCorps Environmental Education Programs for one AmeriCorps naturalist—a quarter time member for 450 hours. Cash match for this grant was a total of \$1,950.

Summer staff for 2022 was Kaelin Armstrong, Isabel Gebers, and Madalyn Derochie served as Summer Naturalists. Alexandra Johonson served as the quarter time (450 hours) AmeriCorps naturalist. WCCF paid the wages for one of our 2022 summer naturalists. We began a shared seasonal position with Stone State Park in May 2022. Micah Lanier was hired as part-time Summer Maintenance Worker. He worked two days a week at DPNC and 3 days a week at Stone Park into August 2022. Summer Naturalist Interns for Summer 2023 were Tahlia Deitloff, Madalyn Derochie, Madi Leuer. Grace Perrin was quarter term member (450 hours) AmeriCorps naturalist. The shared seasonal position with Stone State Park was continued May 2023. Jack Wolfe was hired as a part-time Summer Maintenance Worker, working two days a week at DPNC and 3 days a week at Stone Park.



We also participate in the Senior Employment (SCSEP) program. Sandra Downs served as our part-time Nature Center Host through starting in June 2022. This is a Federally funded training program for seniors to get back into the work force.

**Training/Professional Development:** The DPNC is committed to professional development, and interpretive staff participates in the IAN Annual Professional Development program. Snyder attended the Fall 2022 IAN workshop in Muscatine County. Kruid attended multiple Siouxland Philanthropy learning sessions and Siouxland Chamber of Commerce sessions. Kruid and Sandage attended the Spring IAN workshop in March 2023 in Sioux County, IA. Theresa Kruid was a panelist for Fundraising Ideas session. Support staff is trained in computer software, First Aid, CPR, and other services vital to their jobs. Other trainings were online, and staff participated in numerous webinars and virtual workshops to increase their knowledge.



**Volunteers:** During the following months, July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023, volunteers contributed more than 3126 hours of volunteer service which translates to an estimated \$57,584.00. Support staff at the Nature Center and WCCB is comprised of approximately 188 non-paid volunteers, 12 of these being Junior Volunteers under the age of 18 and several service groups. Volunteer duties



include animal care, gardening, reception & clerical, summer camp naturalist assistant, prairie rescue, educational, curatorial, special events, research, trail maintenance, bird feeding, program assistance, fund raising, campground hosts and general maintenance. Our annual volunteer recognition event was held in May 2023 for the previous year volunteers. Gary LeMoine, Marilyn Milbrodt, and Barb Small were recognized for the highest number of hours. Carlie Benton was also recognized as the junior volunteer for the most hours.

Volunteers are as follows: Amy Anderson, Helen Anderson, Matt Anderson, Kaelin Armstrong, Ashley Ayala, Audie Baughman, Julie Baughman, Patrick Baughman, Tykeesha Beauchene, Matt Beckley, Meg Beckley, Tyler Beckley, Cindy Bennett, Carlie Benton, Nicole Berner, Kaylee Betterton, Danielle Beukelman, Jeanne Bockholt, Carol Boellstorff, Kelsey Bolte, Troy Bostwick, Briar Cliff Women's Basketball Team (7), Camp Ground Hosts (3), Abby Casteneda, Juan Casteneda, Chris Chwirka, Zac Chwirka, Karla Claussen, Steve Claussen, Kandi Custer, Mark Custer, Todd Demoss, Denise Derby, Dennis Derochie, Maddy Derochie, Mike Donovan, Doug Draayer, Emma Erickson, Fletcher Farrer, Gary Flammang, Roxanne Flammang, Chan Follen, Katlyn Froistad, Anita Gaswint, Roger Gaswint, Isabel Gebers, Aaron Gehling, Greg Giles, Eli Gorter, Alma Griffin, Madeline Griffin, Tyler Griffin, Lori Harder, Rae Hattan, Brian Hazlett, Heelan High School (16), Carol Heissel, Hannah Heissel, Sue Hinrichs, Tammy Hogan, Kara Holland, Phyllis Holzrichter, Cindy Hyndman, Alex Johnson, Barb Johnson, Dean Johnson, Katy Jones, Katy Karrer, Kayla Kellen, Tiana Kruid, Rosie Kuehne, Braden Kumm, Gary LeMoine, Keri Leopold, Marjorie Lessmann, Marlin Lessmann, Kenny Leuenberger, Steve Lieber, Tom Limoges, Bianca Llamas, Denise Lopez, Edevin Lopez, Jax Lopez, Emily Martin, Susan McGuire, MC's Tony & Candice, Bob Meis, Alexandra Meyers, Chris Meyers, Marilyn Milbrodt, Judy Miller, Ally Mueller, Bruce Mueller, Cade Mueller, Conner Mueller, John Nash, Red Nash, Tina Natterstad, Austin Newbrough, Erica Newbrough, Megan Newbrough, Megan Noll, Naomi Nuss, Jeff Olson, Todd Olson, Laura Pecaut, Brooke Pedersen, Annie Peterson, David Peterson, Walt Peterson, Ron Polly, Rich Pope, Donna Popp, Linda Rhinehart, Hayley Ridgway, Jesse Ridgway, Kelly Ridgway, Pam Ridgway, Ty Ridgway, Becky Roemmich, Ruth Rose, Heidi Rouse, Brian Sadler, Joann Sadler, Catherine Saulsbury, Pat Saulsbury, Chris Schwerin, Michele Schwerin, Megan Sebade, Tiffany Serrano, Anne Shaner, Ellen Shaner, Mary Siepker, Barb Small, Kerry Small, Mike Smith, Vicki Smith, Dawn Snyder, Stacey Snyder, Jonette Spurlock, Bryan, Sara, Jack & Sam Steussy, Cheri Stewart, Tom Stewart, Neil Stockfleth, Rich Stolpe, Mike Swanson, Tracy Swanson, Bob Sweeney, Brenda Sweeney, Charlotte Sweeney, Sam Thomas, Rod Tondreau, Micki Twedell, Carol Voloshen, Jami Wermers, Russ Wermers, Carly West, Gina West, Lily Wilford, Bill Zales & Chris Zellmer-Zant.

## Volunteer Contributed Services July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Category	Hours	\$/Hour	Total
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### Education/Interpretive (information services, docents, teachers, etc.)

Camp Assistant (9)	129	\$11.00	\$1,419.00
Naturalist Assistant (18)	359	\$15.00	\$5,385.00
Campground Hosts (3)	680	\$15.00	\$10,200.00
Social Media (1)	7	\$15.00	\$105.00
Special Events (118)	680	\$15.00	\$10,200.00

### Administrative/Clerical/Maintenance (office, routine maintenance, etc.)

Clerical (7)	138	\$15.00	\$2,070.00
Maintenance (47)	289	\$15.00	\$4,335.00
Trail Maintenance (5)	280	\$20.00	\$5,600.00

### Curatorial/Collections (research, gardens, care of objects, etc.)

Gardening (4)	10	\$15.00	\$150.00
Garden Consultants (2)	19	\$25.00	\$475.00
Prairie Rescue/Habitat Management (2)	20	\$20.00	\$400.00

### Professional (legal, fundraising, guest speakers, consultants, etc.)

Fundraising Special Events (18)	383	\$25.00	\$9,575.00
Auctioneers (3)	9	\$50.00	\$450.00
Consultants (5)	67	\$50.00	\$3,350.00
Photography (1)	3	\$50.00	\$150.00
Program Instructors (4)	21	\$40.00	\$840.00
Veterinary Service (1)	32	\$90.00	\$2,880.00

<b>Totals</b>	<b>Hours 3,126</b>		<b>\$57,584.00</b>
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## Special Projects

### Fundraising—Nature Calls

The annual *Nature Calls*—beer sampling, nature art sale and auction— was another success. We had just over 580 people attend this year and raised over \$63,000 gross receipts. This was the highest grossing event. After expenses our net profit was \$31,694.11. \$5,000 off the top is designated for seasonal staff, leaving \$26,694.11. This remainder was split three ways:

40% for Nature Center programs/projects	(\$10,667.65)
30% for seasonal staff	(\$8,008.23)
30% for Nature Center maintenance fund	(\$8,008.23)



### Woodbury County Conservation Foundation

October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023		WCCF Memberships
28 Individual Memberships	\$	656.45
26 Family Memberships	\$	993.24
38 Wildlife Conservationist Memberships	\$	2,079.08
47 Woodland Conservationist Memberships	\$	5,806.25
6 Prairie Conservationist Memberships	\$	1,839.56
3 Wetland Conservationist Memberships	\$	1,500.00
2 Distinguished Conservationist Membership	\$	2,000.00
<b>150 Memberships</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>14,874.58</b>
<b>Donation Preference Breakout:</b>		
To Help Further WCCF's Mission	\$	8,681.48
For Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center Support & Camps	\$	5,318.10
For Loess Hills Area Habitat Support	\$	225.00
For Woodbury County Park Enhancements	\$	650.00
<b>Total Memberships</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>14,874.58</b>

The WCCB maintains a close relationship with the Conservation Foundation (WCCF). Dawn Snyder served as the Foundation's Secretary and Treasurer until she retired February 2023. Theresa Kruid was then appointed to fill Snyder's position.

WCCF hosted its annual meeting in February 2023 at the Nature Center. The event hosted Jillian Lenz with Wildlife

Encounters. She brought exotic animals including a kinkajou, 9-banded armadillo, alligator, Maccaw, Tegú lizard, and baby kangaroo. A morning and afternoon session took place totaling 170 people. A separate members only Meet & Greet session was held with more than 40 attending. This special session allowed members to meet the animals up close and even touch or hold a few.

The Foundation typically co-sponsors the Conservation Board Summer Day Camps and the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar. WCCF funded a Summer Naturalist Intern and a Conservation Corps of Iowa crew to provide habitat restoration on the prairie ridge above the Nature Center. They continue conservation education and natural area protection in our area. The minutes of WCCF meetings are on file at the WCCB Office.

Current members of the WCCF Board of Directors are Brian Hazlett, President; Chris Zellmer-Zant, Vice President; Theresa Kruid, Secretary/Treasurer; Chris Jackson; John Helms; Robert Meis; Rich Pope; Norbert Ruhland; 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 is the vehicle for transfer of large donations, grants and memorials to the Woodbury County Conservation Board.

## **Endowment**

In May 2012, the WCCF established an endowment fund within the Siouxland Community Foundation. This gives 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. The WCCF received three endowment gifts this past year totaling \$2,000.00. The end of fiscal year balance of the WCCF Endowment within the Siouxland Community Foundation was \$45,788.98.

**Siouxland Big Give:** WCCF participated in their fifth year of this online fundraising event. We advertised the funds would be used for an outdoor learning shelter at the Nature Center. We received 27 gifts for a total of \$3,110.70. Additional funds for this project were obtained through grants, donations, and the Karen Juhl bequest.

## **List of Donors**

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

### **General & Cash Donations**

Virgil Audus	Loess Hills Audubon Society
Sharron K. Bair	Loess Hills Wild Ones
Bruce & Carol Bickel	Missouri River Runners, Patty Considine
BNSF Railway Foundation	Noah's Hope
Donald & Barbabra Brown	Greg Pranke & Julie Miller-Pranke
CF Industries, Brenda Godfredson	Ruth Rose
Susie Feathers	Nolan Schmeckpepper
Four Paws Fitness & Rehab LLC, Jean Gill	Omaha Community Foundation, Kiewit
Sally Hartley	Employee Charitable Match
Connie Hoag	Security National Corporation
ISU 4-H Woodbury County, Cheryl Connot	Sioux Valley Sports Club
Rosemary Kuehne	Dawn Snyder
Scheels, Lexi Mounts	Woodbury County Fair
Jan Null	Bill Zales

### **Memorial Gifts**

We received a assortment of memorial gifts this past year from a variety of donors. These funds were used for projects such as the Screech Owl aviary, trail bench, and educational programs.

#### **Marv Berenstein Memorial:**

Donald & Barbara Brown

#### **Patti Brown Memorial:**

Marilyn Milbrodt

#### **Bonnie Brown Memorial:**

Greg & Julie Pranke  
Dawn Snyder

#### **Lee Goodwin Memorial:**

Karen Goodwin  
Mark & Susan Nielsen

**Karen Jacky Memorial:**  
Mark & Susan Nielsen

**De Saulsbury Memorial:**  
Dawn Snyder

**Thomas Mahaney Memorial:**  
Dawn Snyder

**Cole McClure Memorial:**  
Bruce & Jeannette Hopkins

## Animal Adoptions Donors

The Nature Center received \$1,215.00 in donations for animal adoptions. These funds help provide food, bedding, housing and care for the resident educational animals and our birdfeeders.

Desiree Bundy  
Lawrence & Juliann Delperdang

Gene & Ginger Martin  
Alex Uhl Family

## Big Give Donors

The Nature Center received \$3,110.70 from the Siouxland Big Give that was dedicated to an outdoor learning shelter.

Amy Anderson  
Cindy Bennett  
Dawn Bostwick  
Elizabeth Dahl  
Gary & Roxanne Flammang  
Sarah Gacke  
Mitch Hessman  
Bruce & Jeanette Hopkins  
Dennis Kluver  
Theresa Kruid  
Jada Kurth  
Gary LeMoine  
Michael & Tammy Mahaney  
Susan McCulley

Robert Meis  
Steve & Jane Merritt  
Marilyn Milbrodt  
Jared & Carol Myers  
Mark & Susan Nielsen  
Scott & Cynthia Patten  
Dave Riemenschneider  
Dawn Snyder  
Lucinda Tryon  
Marc & Tracy Vander Wilt  
Jeri Watkins  
Dennis & Kathleen Weisz  
Anonymous

## Nature Calls 2022 Auction Donors

A Step in Thyme, Kathy Bogenrief  
Adam's Crystal Connections, Adam Plendl  
Adaville Honey Co., Dean & Barbara Johnson  
Albrecht Cycle, Corey Smith  
Artery, Julia & Peter Licht  
Autumn Prairie Designs, Jana Sawin-Peterson  
Axe to Grind  
B & B Cleaning, Corey Brand  
Big Frig, Brock Hutchinson  
Bob Roe's North End Zone, Jason & Jerry  
Bob Roe's Point After, Terri & Bob Roe  
Briar Cliff University Athletics, Susie  
Bud & Mary's, Jessica Small  
Buffalo Alice, Heather Poncelot

Buffalo Wild Wings  
Chick-Fil-A, Kerrin Rol  
Courtyard by Marriott, Jacki Dodds  
Culver's on Hamilton Blvd, Lori Stewart  
Culver's on Singing  
Hills, Karla Mayo  
Davenport Cleaners  
Earl May  
East High School, BJ  
Koch  
Expansion Center  
Famous Dave's,  
Elijahuan  
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 Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sioux City, Jackie  
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 Hauff Midamerican Sports, Steve Hauff  
 Heelan, Tom Betz  
 Hershey Chocolate Company, Loyanne Jensen  
 Hot Worx, Katie McWilliams  
 Jack's Uniforms & Equipment, Dale Vitito  
 Jackson Street Brewing, Dave Winslow  
 Jefferson Beer Supply, Nicki  
 Johnson's Mill, Doug Johnson  
 Kenneth Keith Artworks, Kenneth Keith  
 Koffie Knechtion, Lyle & Maureen Knecht  
 Lamb Theatre, Lindsay Washburn  
 Loess Hills Wild Ones, Ruth Rose  
 MidAmerican Energy Co., Ethan Fahrendholz  
 Midbell Music, Mike Guntren  
 Milwaukee Weiner House, John & Mike Eliades  
 Morningside College Bookstore, Jessica  
 Strohbeen  
 MW Glass & Other Works, Marit Westrich  
 Noah's Hope, Deanna Jarvis  
 North High School, Chris Koch  
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 Palmer Candy Co., Brenda Huls  
 Perry Way Bouquet, Becky Carlson  
 Photography Inspired by Nature, Connie  
 Richardson-Smith  
 Pizza Ranch in Leeds  
 Pizza Ranch in Sergeant Bluff  
 Ponca State Park. Scott Oligmueller  
 Premier Glazer's Beer & Beverage, Steffanie  
 Danke  
 Pure Fishing, Derek Heronimus  
 Rascals Beer Brewing Club, Marvin Sorenson  
 Rascals Beer Brewing Club, Chris Ziegler  
 Red Lobster, Kat Trudell  
 Riverside Ace Hardware  
 S. McCulley Wildlife Art, Susan McCulley  
 Scheels All Sports, Lexi Mounts

Seaboard Triumph Foods, Erin Cantrell  
 Shady Grove Pottery, Chaeli Kohn  
 Sioux City Musketeers, Travis Morgan  
 Sioux City Railroad Museum, Matt & Shannon  
 Merk  
 Sioux City Symphony, Trinetta Patterson  
 Small Town Sportsman, Dave Riemenschneider  
 Snowflake Woods, Lynn Jarvis  
 Starbucks, Amibal Corona  
 Texas Roadhouse  
 The Black Box Bakery, Jean Marie Althaus  
 The Nature Conservancy - Broken Kettle  
 Grasslands, Scott Moats  
 The Spot Espresso Bar & Café, Stephanie  
 Cacioppo & Jennifer Hart  
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 Valiant Vineyards Winery, Adrienne Lewis  
 Waddy's Whistle Stop, Katie Johns  
 Warrior Hotel, Abigail Heald  
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 Robert Miners  
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 Dr. Robert & Phyll Powell  
 Kelly & Pam Ridgway  
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 Sonya Sexton  
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 Bryan & Sara Steussy  
 Scott Toben  
 Bill & Dotty Zales

## Nature Calls 2022 Sponsors

### White-tailed Deer Sponsors

BAIRD—The Holzrichter Morrison Group  
 F&M Bank

Hy-Vee  
 Johnston Excavating  
 KCAU 9 News



Dan & Kay Pecaut  
Powell Broadcasting  
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### **Bald Eagle Sponsors**

Dr. Luis Lebrede & Ruth M. Rose  
MidAmerican Energy  
State Steel

### **Bobcat Sponsors**

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Moore, Corbett, Heffernan, Moeller, & Meis,  
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Siouxland Animal Hospital PC  
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### **Falcon Contributors**

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Vitus CPAs  
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### **Bluebird Contributors**

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Farmers Insurance – Dawn Bratvold Agency  
Dr. Paul & Penny Fee  
FNB Bank  
Marvin & Karen Heidman  
Charles & Lynnette Hoffman  
Jensen Dealerships  
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Knoepfler Chevrolet  
Chris & Sandy Koch  
Raymond Kuwahara, M.D. - CNOS  
Legacy Financial, LLC, Gregory G. Giles  
Dr. Stee Maxwell  
Sioux Valley Community Credit Union  
United Real Estate Solutions—Kevin A.  
McManamy

### **Special Thanks**

Madelyn Baughman  
Briar Cliff University Women's Basketball  
Brioux City Brewery  
Chesterman Company  
Roger Gaswint, Gaswint Auctioneering  
Rae Hattan  
Jackson Street Brewing  
Junior League of Sioux City  
KES Productions  
L&L Distributing Co., Inc.  
Marto Brewing Co.  
Oscar Carl Vineyard  
Premier Glazer's Beer & Beverage  
Record Printing  
Sioux City Convention Center  
Small Town Sportsman – Dave  
Riemenschneider  
Smithfield Foods, Inc.  
Staber Meats  
The Shooting Shop LLC – Bob Farmer  
Tony & Candice at KSUX 105.7 FM  
Wise I Brewing Company  
Woodbury County Information &  
Communications Commission

## Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center

### Staff

Daniel Heissel, *Conservation Board Director*  
Brian Stehr, *Deputy Director*  
Dawn Snyder, *Education Programs Director*  
Theresa Kruid, *Naturalist/Education Programs Director*  
Kari Sandage, *Naturalist*  
Tyler Flammang, *GIS Resource Technician*  
Dawn Bostwick, *Office Manager*  
Pam Pfautsch, *Part-time Receptionist*  
Marilyn Milbrodt, *Part-time Receptionist*  
Dorothy Shamblen, *Part-time Receptionist*  
Rhonda Kneifl, *Part-time Clerk*  
Betty West, *Part-time Volunteer Coordinator/Receptionist*  
Sandra Downs, *Senior Worker*



### Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday 9am – 4:00pm

Sunday 1 – 4:00pm

*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.



**IX. FY '23 FINANCIAL STATEMENT****0001-22 GENERAL CONSERVATION BUDGET****INCOME**

Refunds/Rebates	\$ 825.00
Nature Center Rental	6,200.19
Fuel Tax Refunds	4,361.49
Taxation	2,246,362.99
TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$ 2,257,749.67</u>

**EXPENSE**

<b><u>Administration</u></b>	
Department Heads	\$ 130,153.16
Wage Plan Employees	117,849.49
Supervisory	92,851.92
Wage Plan Employees-Part Time	3,047.34
FICA-County Contribution	25,348.81
IPERS-County Contribution	32,155.35
Employee Hospitalization	67,707.34
Life Insurance	151.78
Dental Insurance	1,392.98
LTD Insurance	1,738.60
Food & Provisions	296.53
Gas & Oil	3,698.44
Lubricants	421.55
Tires & Tubes	246.95
Office Supplies	1,349.46
Magazines & Books	372.38
Motor Vehicle Equipment	81.41
Law Enforcement Equipment	3,980.28
Safety Equipment	376.12
Wearing/Safety Apparel.	908.97
Official Publication & Legals	559.68
Typing, Printing & Binding	2,617.67
Postage & Mailing	844.65
Travel Expenses	2,715.73
AirCard Expense	957.41
School of Instruction	1,832.00
Professional Services	505.00
Medical Fees	200.00
Repair & Maintenance: Vehicles	125.94
Contractual Services	798.00
Copier Maintenance Contract	1,807.49
Dues/Memberships	4,014.90
License & Permits	124.54
Drainage Taxes	10,419.45
Motor Vehicle Purchases	183,226.66
Office Equipment & Furniture	1,199.00
Lease/Purchase Agreement	2,429.40
Computer Software	4,439.43
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 702,945.81</u>

County Parks

Wage Plan Employees	\$ 301,243.12
Supervisory	200,153.21
Temporary Employees	124,196.95
Overtime	90.12
FICA-County Contribution	46,765.85
IPERS-County Contribution	47,722.19
Employee Hospitalization	99,585.58
Life Insurance	302.65
Dental Insurance	2,777.57
LTD Insurance	2,557.78
Animal Care	134.82
Chemicals & Gases-Herbicides	5,571.20
Chemicals & Gases-Brush	177.50
Fertilizer & Seed	3,042.41
Food & Provisions	50.65
Custodial Supplies	8,871.98
Gas & Oil	53,973.49
Lubricants	4,859.30
Tires & Tubes	3,242.74
Motor Vehicle Equipment	1,929.05
Law Enforcement Equipment	15,117.10
Shop Equipment	309.99
Recreational Equipment	297.63
Safety Equipment	1,644.44
Arms/Ammunition	5,176.57
Wearing/Safety Apparel	4,646.50
Travel Expenses	3,526.09
Telephone Expense	5,513.76
Cell Phone Expense	4,800.00
AirCard Expense	1,712.76
School of Instruction	8,958.90
Natural & LP Gas	4,558.56
Electric Light & Power	72,319.41
Water & Sewer	5,629.03
Garbage	19,462.40
Repair & Maintenance: Vehicles	2,081.24
Repairs & Maintenance: Buildings & Grounds	64,338.17
Repair & Maintenance: Equipment	29,132.62
Repair & Maintenance: Radio & Related Equipment	1,010.37
Licenses & Permits	31.00
Office Equipment & Furniture	3,660.19
Minor Equipment & Hand Tools	8,560.54
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 1,169,735.43</u>

Naturalist

Wage Plan Employees	\$ 86,527.55
Supervisory	89,776.98
Wage Plan Employees-Part Time	68,194.10
FICA-County Contribution	18,097.31
IPERS-County Contribution	22,777.91
Employee Hospitalization	34,775.62
Life Insurance	97.38
Dental Insurance	893.69
LTD Insurance	899.35
Food & Provisions	42.17
Gas & Oil	1,386.82
Lubricants	62.38

Office Supplies	251.09
Recreational Supplies	412.97
Safety Equipment	56.15
Wearing/Safety Apparel	627.43
Typing, Printing & Binding	2,077.00
Postage & Mailing	40.25
Travel Expenses	482.10
School of Instruction	253.00
Repair & Maintenance: Vehicles	20.00
Dues/Membership	313.24
Office Equipment & Furniture	54.99
Computer Software	1,148.79
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 329,268.27</u>

<u>Nature Center</u>	
Custodial Supplies	\$ 1,104.82
Gas & Oil	438.93
Lubricants	233.24
Telephone Expense	615.80
Cell Phone Expense	3,671.24
Electric Light & Power	19,414.65
Water & Sewer	107.87
Garbage	799.00
Repairs & Maintenance: Buildings & Grounds	5,010.98
Repairs & Maintenance: Equipment	220.93
Contractual Services	23,071.58
Minor Equipment & Hand Tools	1,046.12
Equipment Rental Charges	65.00
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 55,800.16</u>

TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 2,257,749.67
APPROVED BUDGET	<u>\$ 2,358,521.00</u>
BALANCE JUNE 30, 2023	<u><u>\$ 100,771.33</u></u>

### **0005 AMERICA RESCUE PLAN ACT**

#### **EXPENSES**

<u>Conservation Administration</u>	
Buildings	\$ 8,928.25
TOTAL EXPENSES <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY23)</i>	<u>\$ 8,928.25</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u><u>\$ 8,928.25</u></u>

## **0023 REAP FUND**

### **INCOME**

Per County Allocation received FY 23	\$ 7,168.00
Per Capita Allocations received FY 23	23,573.00
Grants	10,000.00
Interest	589.42
TOTAL INCOME <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY23)</i>	<u>\$ 41,330.42</u>

### **EXPENSES**

#### **Administration**

Land Acquisition	\$ -
TOTAL EXPENSES <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY23)</i>	<u>\$ -</u>

### **NET INCOME/LOSS**

**\$ 41,330.42**

FUND CASH BALANCE JULY 1, 2022 \$ 103,272.88

FUND CASH BALANCE JUNE 30, 2023 \$ 40,741.88

## **0057 NATURE CENTER**

### **INCOME**

Donations	\$ 139,819.79
Gift Shop Sales	5,331.57
Program Fees	14,632.17
TOTAL INCOME <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY23)</i>	<u>\$ 159,783.53</u>

### **EXPENSE**

#### **Administration**

Repairs & Maintenance: Buildings & Grounds	\$ 73,663.43
Sub-Total:	\$ 73,663.43

#### **Nature Center Gift Shop**

Promotional Activities	\$ 1,993.67
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 1,993.67</u>

#### **Nature Center Programs**

Temporary Employees	\$ 18,549.36
FICA-County Contribution	1,419.01
Animal Care	4,497.48
Food & Provisions	647.41
Office Supplies	161.13
Program Supplies	7,020.98
Promotional Activities	28,051.38
Office Equipment & Furniture	696.32
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 61,043.07</u>

TOTAL EXPENSE *(Accrued to include Period 13 FY23)* \$ 136,700.17

### **NET INCOME/LOSS**

**\$ 23,083.36**

FUND CASH BALANCE JULY 1, 2022 \$ 88,323.67

FUND CASH BALANCE JUNE 30, 2023 \$ 114,922.38



## 0067 CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

### INCOME

Camping Fees	\$ 280,560.95
Land Rentals	4,165.65
Equipment Rentals	325.00
Donations	3,850.00
Interest	1,396.34
Grants	15,000.00
Miscellaneous	1,606.69
Sale of Other Commodities (Sign Material)	670.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b> <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY23)</i>	<b>\$ 307,574.63</b>

### EXPENSES

<u>Administration</u>	
Auditors Transfers	\$ 138,000.00
Concession Inventory	895.62
Promotional Activities	3,317.19
Taxes & Fees	3,166.05
Land Acquisitions	1,898.00
Buildings	194,811.19
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b> <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY23)</i>	<b>\$ 342,088.05</b>

**NET INCOME/LOSS** **\$ (34,513.42)**

FUND CASH BALANCE JULY 1, 2022 \$ 307,253.11

FUND CASH BALANCE JUNE 30, 2023 \$ 270,781.35

## 1500 COUNTY BLDGS & PROP CIP (Conservation CIP Loan)

### EXPENSES

<u>Conservation Administration</u>	
Buildings	\$ 109,722.99
Roads	1,350.11
Playground Equipment	11,030.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b> <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY23)</i>	<b>\$ 122,103.10</b>
<b>TOTAL LOAN</b>	<b>\$ 122,103.10</b>

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Chris Zellmer-Zant, Chairperson

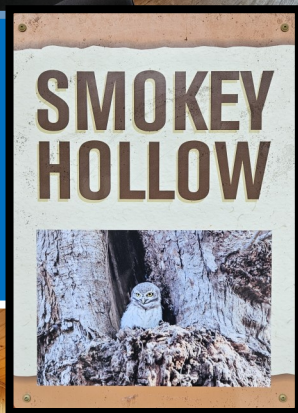
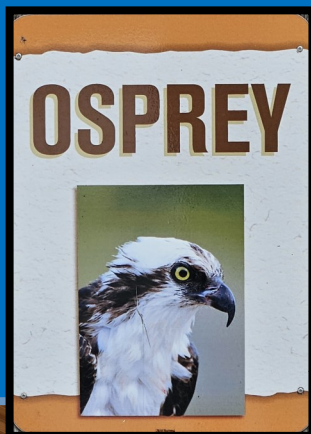
  
Tom Limoges, Secretary

  
Daniel Heissel, Director

# Annual Report

## Woodbury County Conservation Board

July 1, 2023—June 30, 2024



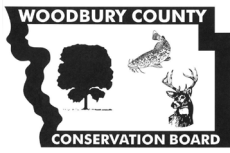


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# Woodbury County Conservation Board

4500 Sioux River Road, Sioux City, IA 51109-1657

Phone: 712/258-0838  
Fax: 712/258-1261

Board Members:  
Cindy Bennett  
Aaron Gehling  
Tom Limoges  
Neil Stockfleth  
Christine Zellmer-Zant

Daniel Heissel, Director  
Brian Stehr, Deputy Director  
Theresa Kruid, Education Director

## Executive Summary

**MISSION:** *Woodbury County Conservation Board is a regional agency tasked with providing high-quality and valuable education, recreation, enhancement, and preservation of our natural resources through professional and courteous service for the betterment of current and future generations.*

**WOODBURY COUNTY VISION:** *Woodbury County dedicates itself to providing high-quality services to meet the ever-changing demands and needs of its citizens.*

### **FY 24 HIGHLIGHTS:**

- ARPA money from Supervisors to replace all eight law enforcement radios in patrol vehicles
- Purchased rifle vests and helmets for all eight officers
- Little Sioux sewer upgrade completed with ARPA money
- \$80,000 Gilchrist Grant to purchase Izaak Walton property

### **CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT BY THE NUMBERS:**

- Manage 21 areas totaling 6,219 acres
- Hold and monitor 15 conservation easements on 1,695 acres
- Park revenues totaled \$309,014.03
- Over 50,000 visitors to Dorothy Pecaute Nature Center
- Staffed by 16 full-time, 4 regular part-time, and 25 seasonal employees.

The Woodbury County Conservation Board is a five-member volunteer board appointed by the county Board of Supervisors. Members are appointed for five-year staggered terms. Meetings are scheduled for the second 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 while dovetailing with the County's Vision. The Woodbury County Conservation Board likes to partner with the County Board of Supervisors, the Iowa Natural Resources Department, and numerous local organizations described in Section IV of this report. We utilize feedback from our park users that we get from our comment cards available at our areas to help improve our facilities and services. Woodbury County is blessed with outstanding natural resource and outdoor recreation opportunities supported by its taxpayers. It is always challenging trying to make the dollars stretch farther on projects. The staff is glad to have such a great Conservation Board that has a vision and to have the support of our Board of Supervisors for our program. Please explore and enjoy your county park areas. You'll be glad you did!

Yours In Conservation,

Dan Heissel, Director



# WOODBURY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

## ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024

### I. BOARD ROSTER/MEETINGS

The conservation board members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors for five-year terms. Members serving in 2023 - 2024 were as follows:

<u>Meetings Attended</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Expiration Date</u>
11	Cindy Bennett	Member	December 31, 2028
8	Aaron Gehling	Member	December 31, 2027
11	Tom Limoges	Member	December 31, 2026
8	Chris Zellmer-Zant	Chairperson	December 31, 2025
10	Neil Stockfleth	Secretary	December 31, 2024

Mark Nelson was appointed as our Board of Supervisors Liaison and attended meetings when he was able.

The board held 11 regular monthly meetings during the fiscal year and one special meeting, for a total of 12 meetings. Minutes of these meetings are on file in the conservation office at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center and are available for viewing on our website [www.woodburyparks.org](http://www.woodburyparks.org).

#### OTHER MEETINGS ATTENDED

One staff member attended the 64th Annual Conference of Iowa County Conservation Boards at Decorah in Winneshiek County in September 2024. All eight of the department's law enforcement officers attended the County Conservation Peace Officers Association's annual law enforcement workshop in October 2024 at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy in Johnston, Iowa. Staff members assisted with a district conservation booth at the Clay County Fair in September 2024.

Additional meetings attended by employees and/or board members during the fiscal year included:

- Woodbury County Safety meeting
- Pesticide and Water Operator CEU training meetings
- Woodbury County Conservation Foundation meetings
- Woodbury County Health and Wellness Committee meetings
- Woodbury County Board of Supervisors Meetings
- Woodbury County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Grow Siouxland Committee meetings
- Loess Hills Alliance committee meetings
- Woodbury County REAP meeting
- IACCB District III meetings
- Pheasants Forever Chapter
- Department Staff meetings

### II. ADMINISTRATION/MAINTENANCE

#### Staffing

Department staff during the fiscal year included 16 full-time, 4 regular part-time, and 24 seasonal employees. Part-time senior aide positions through the Woodbury County Community Action Agency continued to provide valuable receptionist assistance while providing employment for previously retired individuals. Employment through this program is limited which can result in a new employee each year. Numerous

temporary seasonal employees were hired from April through October for maintenance tasks in the county park and wildlife areas.

The department's director, deputy director, three resource managers and three assistant resource managers are certified law enforcement officers who maintain their certification through the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA). 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.

Various employment programs, provided through a variety of other agencies in the community, help supplement board staffing needs when available. Conservation Corps Iowa (CCI), the AmeriCorps program through the Minnesota Conservation Corps, was contracted to work from October 2, 2023, to October 5, 2023. The crew worked at the Nature Center and removed brush from the ridges and hillsides and made brush piles to be burned at a later date. The cost of this crew this year was \$4,480.00.

Campground host volunteers provided 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 fundraiser event utilizes over 70 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, 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 or promoted throughout the fiscal year were as follows:

- (1) Executive Director
- (1) Deputy Director
- (3) Resource Manager
- (3) Assistant Resource Manager
- (3) Resource Technician
- (1) Office Manager
- (1) Part-Time Office Clerk
- (9) Seasonal Park Ranger
- (1) Education Programs Director
- (2) Naturalist
- (1) GIS/Resource Technician
- (2) Nature Center Receptionist
- (1) Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator
- (5) Summer Intern Naturalist
- (2) Part-Time AmeriCorps Naturalist
- (7) Security Guard
- (8) Seasonal Park Maintenance Employee
- (1) Habitat Stewardship Intern

This breaks down to 16 full-time employees, 4 part-time employees, and up to 24 seasonal employees if all positions are filled. The number of seasonal employees listed represents the various people hired to fill these positions and may vary depending on funding and need and availability of qualified candidates.

### **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:

<b><u>Grants Submitted</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>\$ Requested</u></b>	<b><u>\$ Awarded</u></b>
Gilchrist Foundation	Izaak Walton Purchase	\$80,000	\$80,000

Conservation staff continues to seek grant dollars and leverage available funds to assist with major development projects, land acquisition, publicity, and environmental education. **During FY24, a total of \$80,000 in grants was received and administered.**

## **Long-Range Planning**

Long-range strategic planning is a very important responsibility of the board. Long-range planning needs to be addressed to maintain focus and purpose by the board and an efficient, effective, and responsive department. Long-range planning is now done during the summer when the board meets in the parks. We hold long range planning just with staff from that district and area and have more one-on-one time with staff about the areas they manage. This has been working out great, and we will continue to do it in the future. This makes prioritizing projects a lot easier when it comes to funding.

## **Board Policies**

Board policies are reviewed annually and addressed when needs arise. The conservation board coordinates department policies closely with other county policies and procedures. The deputy director, who serves as the chief law enforcement officer for the department, worked with the Sheriff's Department to incorporate many of the Sheriff's Department policies into a new Law Enforcement Policy for the conservation department which was adopted by the board.

## **Training**

Training requirements for new and existing employees involve 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 can 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 eight law enforcement officers attended various training and certification classes at the Law Enforcement Academy. The annual County Safety Meeting for Secondary Roads and Conservation employees was held in November, and field staff were able to attend and receive training on chainsaws, bloodborne pathogens, and general safety practices.

The Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards annual conference was held at Winneshiek County in September 2024. Nine 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. All full-time staff maintain CPR, AED, and Basic First Aid certification, and recertification classes were attended during the year for these.

## **Committees/Appointments**

The education programs director served as a delegate from Woodbury County to the Loess Hills Alliance Board of Directors. The deputy director served on the Habitat and Executive Committees for the Woodbury County Chapter of Pheasants Forever. The director served on the Woodbury County Health and Wellness Committee and the statewide Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant Scoring Committee. Theresa Kruid 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. Director Dan Heissel and Theresa Kruid, along with board member, Christine Zellmer-Zant, served 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 Pecaute Nature Center and 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, firefighting equipment to be used on private lands. The Alliance also provides continuing training for Advanced Wildland Burns whereby the 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. The Soil & Water Conservation District provides trees every year for kids in grade school.

The 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. 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 participates in the DNR's water quality monitoring program on its two swimming beaches.

The board continued to nurture partnerships and agreements with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation regarding conservation easements and with 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 many 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 is in place between the conservation board and Secondary Roads. The conservation department must also maintain a close working relationship with the Sheriff's Office. Conservation law enforcement officers depend heavily on Sheriff's Deputies to assist with problems that arise in the parks and any subsequent arrests. The Sheriff's Office assisted with updating the board's Law Enforcement Policy and with researching specific equipment for department officers.

A more detailed description of various cooperative ventures is discussed in **Section V** 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. Tyler Flammang continues to serve as our GIS/Resource Technician and serves as our GIS person. Staff also use a drone for various projects, such as prairie burns, habitat management and water level management at our lakes and wetlands.

The board's website, [www.woodburyparks.org](http://www.woodburyparks.org), provides a multitude of information for visitors and is updated regularly by staff. Information on the cabin and enclosed shelter rental dates 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 cabin and enclosed shelter reservations entered the electronic age when they went "online" through MyCountyParks.com website December 23, 2016. All four park offices are connected to the internet and the county's Outlook email and main "U" drive which provides an efficient method of information exchange with the main office. Most full-time staff have opted to receive and access their work email on their personal cell phones. It is the 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. Fiber optic service has been installed at Southwood Conservation Area.

The board continued to provide two outlets for the public to obtain DNR licenses at Little Sioux Park and Southwood Conservation Area. These outlets are part of the DNR's electronic licensing system that has been operating since 2000, and these systems were upgraded in 2010. All IDNR licenses are also available online.

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 website provides excellent access for all county conservation boards in Iowa to promote their areas and facilities to potential visitors across the country. The board has its own website [www.woodburyparks.org](http://www.woodburyparks.org) that promotes our areas as well.

### **Environmental Education/Publicity**

The board's environmental education program continued to experience strong demand for programs and information. Emphasis for school class programs is centered on encouraging classes to visit the nature center and experience the outdoors in the loess hills. Students can 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. Staff conducted numerous radio and television interviews concerning various programs and events during the fiscal year. The board cooperated

with the Woodbury County Soil Conservation District in providing trees to fifth graders in rural school districts throughout the county. The director, several resource managers, naturalists, and the deputy director 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. 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 VIII**.

The board provided educational programs at the Woodbury County Fair. Staff also assisted with a District III County Conservation booth at the Clay County Fair.

The 20<sup>th</sup> annual Nature Calls Fundraiser was held in September of this year. Please see reports under the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center later in this report for more information.

### **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.

Communication efforts among staff locations have been enhanced with the use of e-mail, high-speed internet, and cell phones.

### **Equipment**

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:

	<b><u>Item</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>
1	Bobcat Track loader	\$58,733
1	Chevy ½ Ton 4WD	\$35,109
1	Kubota UTV	\$25,816
1	2023 Kubota F2690 Front Deck Mower	<u>\$21,000</u>
		\$129,842

A total of \$129,842 was spent on this equipment. A complete equipment inventory is on file in the conservation office.

**Law Enforcement Equipment** – This past year one of our officers was involved in the Hornick shooting incident that cost the lives of two people. Our officer was the only one on scene that did not have a rifle vest or helmet to wear. Our department had been pursuing grant dollars for these the past few years and had been unsuccessful. After this situation arose, the director came to the board and proposed these be ordered and that money be found in the budget to pay for them. Our officer's safety must come first. Vests were ordered and received. Each officer now has a rifle vest along with a helmet that will help protect them from possible rifle fire. Policy will state that when responding to a call knowing a rifle is involved, they will be put on prior to arriving at the call or, should the situation arise, they will be put on immediately.

### **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 need and available grants and revenues and can fluctuate throughout the year. **Section VII** of this report describes various capital improvement projects for each prospective area. 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 are to be monitored and adjusted periodically to ensure a competitive product and price, but these revenues will need to be supplemented with additional sources. Long-range planning must be an ongoing effort by the conservation board and staff and should include the Board of Supervisors in dealing with particularly costly projects. 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. Some major projects, such as road resurfacing, are simply out of the conservation board's ability to repay and will need to be funded by bonds issued through the Board of Supervisor's Debt Service Fund. The Iowa Outdoor Natural Resources Trust Fund can be a significant source of revenue when it is funded.

#### **Land Acquisition**

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 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 V**, 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 local colleges and universities, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Whitetails Unlimited, Sioux Valley Sports Club, 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. The Sheriff's Department provides critical assistance to park officers in law enforcement situations. It is imperative that these types of relationships continue among departments.

### **Priorities/Strategic Planning**

The board's policies and long-range plans will continue to be reviewed and updated, as necessary. Future planning efforts will assist in developing the board's budget requests, and a strategic planning meeting of the board needs to be held annually. The board is currently holding strategic planning sessions in the summer when they have board meetings out in the park. After every board meeting, they hold strategic planning with staff from that park and district and go through long-range planning. This seems to work out well and will continue. The board can get more one-on-one input from staff in those areas. 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 and has helped tremendously in dealing with retirements from key positions.

### **Staff**

Full-time conservation staff numbers have been insufficient for many years. Optimally, the department should have a minimum of three additional full-time positions to operate most efficiently and responsively to the public. Discussion of additional staff continues to be addressed through strategic planning and communication with the Board of Supervisors with overall county budget concerns being the limiting factor. Priorities for full-time staff positions include a natural resources coordinator. 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. Position requests have been favorably received by the Board of Supervisors, but budget constraints have not allowed many positions to be added. 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 as they handle various park duties, and staff will continue to seek individuals willing to serve in that capacity. The board annually recognizes 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 with 36 acres and the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center/Board Office area at Stone Park with 10 acres. The board also operates two areas under management agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Copeland Park Access on the Little Sioux River west of Correctionville at the State Highway #31 bridge and Meyer Access, a river access site on the Little Sioux River near the D-50 bridge south of Anthon. The Bigelow Park management agreement was renewed as a 50-year management lease agreement in 2010.

### **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. Wildlife food plots were planted on public wildlife areas. Controlled prairie burns for grassland improvement, as well as seed production, were done by staff. Staff cooperated with the Woodbury County Pheasants Forever Chapter in providing free seed for establishing food plots on public and private lands and handed out corn, sorghum, and beans food plot seed.



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 seven 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. Depending on time and weather, staff typically harvest 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. The board assists the Secondary Roads Department with seeding various road shouldering, re-grading, 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 are maintained on the north shore of Brown's Lake and east shore of Snyder Bend Lake. Other non-game efforts include a variety of programs offered to the public. Representatives from the Waterfowl Association of Iowa have assisted with installing nesting structures at Owego Wetland Complex.

In the summer of 2018, staff were able to get four swans in for Little Sioux Park where they had fenced off a special pen that has an aerator and a self-feeder. This has become a very popular attraction for park users. Late in the summer of 2023, the swans were moved to a DNR site due to low water conditions at Little Sioux Park. Once water levels return and it is deemed safe to return, the swans will be returned to their enclosure.

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 is 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.

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 currently maintains a zero balance. The conservation board has designated Owego Wetland Complex as their main priority for expenditure of any SEP funds.

5. Naturalist Programs

Please refer to **Section VIII - 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 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. 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 1,281 acres of additional wildlife habitat areas in the county with help in purchasing the Zook, Briese and Salsness parcels. In the spring of 2022, the Pheasants Forever (PF) Chapter and conservation staff cooperated in providing sorghum 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 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 designated 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 utilizes the assistance of the Heritage Foundation when they need to acquire a parcel that goes to auction or is being sold by a realtor. The foundation provides advantages, including 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 conservation 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 hills 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. Theresa Kruid, education director, and Christine Zellmer-Zant, conservation board member, served as representatives on the foundation board of directors. Theresa 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.

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.

For the 2024 fiscal year, \$12 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 a 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 2024 fiscal year, Woodbury County spent approximately 38.78 cents per thousand dollars of taxable valuation on conservation programs. During the fiscal year, Woodbury County received \$7,588 for its per county share and \$24,174 for its per capita share from REAP.

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. 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 existing REAP funds will be used to assist with land acquisitions by matching grants used to purchase property

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. 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. Staff will continue to work with this organization to promote their efforts in enhancing wildlife habitat and populations in the county. In 2021/2022 a \$5,000 grant was received from the NWTF for the Salsness property purchase.

V. LAND ACQUISITION

Easements, river accesses, and expansion of existing areas 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. Most all the time we are approached by landowners to see if we are interested in purchasing their property.

At the end of the fiscal year, the conservation board managed 23 different areas comprising approximately 6,459 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, two open shelters, 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.



### 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 29-unit modern camping area, a tent camping area, a camper's shower and restroom building, enclosed shelter house 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.



Mike Massey, Resource Technician for Browns Lake/Snyder Bend, announced his retirement and was done in March of this year. Mike retired from his regular job and then worked for us for 7 years at the Conservation Board. Interviews were held for his position, and Skyler Foley was hired to replace him. Skyler comes from Howard County where he had worked for a couple years as a park ranger.



### Izaak Walton League Property

The Izaak Walton League property sits next to Bigelow Park and has 300 feet of shoreline along with 1 acre of property and the old club house for the local Izaak Walton League Chapter. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) stepped in and handled all the negotiations and purchased the property for \$75,000. The Conservation board has applied for a Gilchrist Grant in the amount of \$80,000 to cover the purchase and closing costs. The Conservation Board received the grant of \$80,000 from the Gilchrist Foundation in July. Staff closed the deal with the INHF, and ownership has been transferred to the county. The conservation board and staff will be discussing the future of the property in their upcoming long-range planning sessions.



### 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 were 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 shelter house, 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 immediate concern for this park is the condition of the park asphalt roads. The 2.2 miles of asphalt have reached the end of life expectancy after 20 years and need to be resurfaced or renovated soon. Longer-range plans include renovation of Bellamy Campground, addition of playground equipment near the beach, replacement of playground surfacing material, asphalt road repairs, and development of the Peters Pit area. Little Sioux Park generated the largest amount of revenue during 2023-2024 and continued to be busy. New and renovated facilities continue to attract more users, and the Union Bridge trail continues to be extremely popular with park users and Correctionville citizens.

Camping numbers were down due to the beach still being closed when the park was opened in the spring of 2023, the start of the fiscal period being covered by this annual report, due to low water and serious drop-off that created a safety risk for children. Old water heaters went down in Bellamy campground and were replaced with on-demand water heaters that are more energy efficient and natural gas fired. Water is only heated when hot water faucets are turned on and the response is quick. The well at Bellamy campground had to be shut down due to it going dry. It is a shallow well and, with the drought, it couldn't keep up. If it doesn't respond in a year, we will end up having to close it per the DNR requirements now that





Little Sioux is considered a Public Water source. Discussions were had on whether we needed to drill a new well. We had the ability to flip a valve and run Bellamy off the Riverside campground well. The well pump at Riverside was replaced with a much larger pump, and it seems to be keeping up with the demand placed on the well. This will have to be monitored, and if the well can't keep up with the demand, a new well will need to be drilled. Discussions with well drillers and University of Iowa's geological division show that we would need to drill down at least 285 feet to get into the Dakota Aquifer to have good quality water and enough to supply the park.

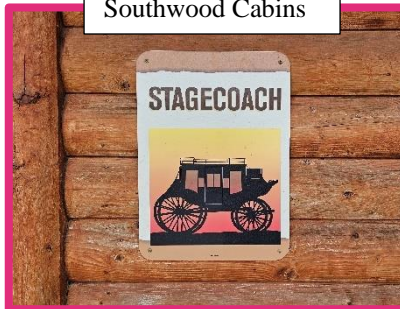
In April of 2024, the tail end of this fiscal period, and before parks opened, we surveyed the beach and water levels and found that levels were up and that the drop-offs had settled out. We now had pretty much a zero-grade drop off which would be safe for children and others using the beach. One theory is that the shallow water allowed ice to shift sand and removed the ledge that created the drop-off. Staff was able to advertise and plan on opening the beach when the park opened in the spring. This will be a big boost for our usage as people were not coming if they couldn't use the beach.

Secondary Roads started to clear and begin a graveling operation on property they own on the north end of Little Sioux Park. Plans are to turn this property over to the conservation board once the gravel is removed. This will be a 10-to-15-year project to complete all the graveling.

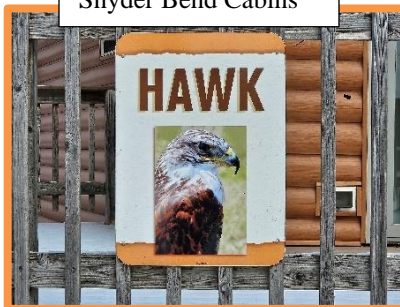
The conservation board looked at cabin rates across the park system and decided to eliminate the weekday rates/weekend rates and go with a standard nightly rate and adjust all the cabins rates. Little Sioux Cabins went from \$50/\$55 to \$65 per night, Snyder Bend went from \$85/\$125 to \$125 per night, and Southwood went from \$70/\$90 to \$100 per night. These rates had not been adjusted in quite some time, and the board felt these were fair for the amenities offered in these parks.



Southwood Cabins



Snyder Bend Cabins





#### 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 were 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. Staff worked with a local architectural firm to look at plans for enclosing the open shelter, but cost estimates were prohibitive.

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 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 miles west of Smithland. Most 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, a boat launching area and dock, modern restroom and shower building, maintenance shop/office and storage area, and a residence.

This park provides equestrian trails and campsites, and a group of volunteers with the Back Country Horsemen frequent the park and conduct many trail improvements. Native grass seed harvest operations were headquartered at Southwood Conservation Area where seed is cleaned, dried, and stored.

This area is a popular destination for people who enjoy large, undeveloped open spaces that still have access to basic amenities. It is also a popular spot for equestrian users, hunters, and campers. Cabin reservations are expected to have a big impact on visitation in the future, and the demand may require additional cabins. It is estimated that at least 45,000 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. New parking signs along the public roads were installed to direct users to specific parking lots. This area is open for public hunting and provides good opportunities for a large variety of upland game species and contains a nice farm pond for pan fish species.

7. Midway Park

This 20-acre abandoned gravel pit site is located three and one-half miles north of Moville 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, Moville, 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. Dixon Access

In 2018 the conservation board reached a verbal agreement with Secondary Roads on the management of a boat access 2 miles south of Anthon off Hwy 31, east on Morgan Trail where a bridge had been removed. The ROW is still owned by Secondary Roads, but the conservation board will be managing the boat ramp. In the fall of 2017, the conservation board poured cement over top of rip rap to have a concrete ramp for better access.

10. Inkpaduta River Access

In February 1989, the board obtained a two-acre river access by easement. 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.

District III is going after state designation for this water trail which will allow for funding for signage and promotion.

11. 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.

12. 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. The area features a concrete boat ramp access to the river.

13. 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 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, 315 acres in 2007, and the Zook addition of 82.5 acres in 2019. The area is located between Oto and Smithland and presently consists of four separate units totaling 2,164.5 acres. The project is partially funded over nine years with a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program grant through the Natural Resource Conservation Service and was completed in 2016. Prescribed burns were not conducted during the year. This area contains several CRP contracts expiring soon.

The Board was able to purchase the Zook parcel that sits along the south edge of Unit One when it became available in June of 2019 with the help of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation at public



auction. The INHF was able to purchase the 82.5 acres, and the board entered into a repurchase agreement and paid it off with a Habitat Stamp Grant in the spring of 2021.

The 240-acre Salsness parcel became available, and the conservation board was able to secure it with the help of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in 2021. Staff received a REAP grant in December of 2021 to purchase from the INHF.

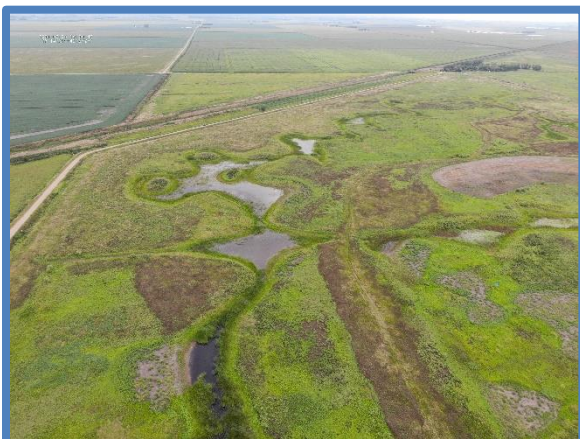
The dam was repaired with funds from a Hungry Canyons Grant that paid for 85% of the project. Secondary Roads helped with the planning, design, and application of the Hungry Canyons Grant since they are the entity on record as a member of Hungry Canyons. This is another example of cooperation between county departments that is crucial.

Future plans include construction of a new watershed structure near County Road D-54 and removal of remaining interior fences. Existing native prairie areas, as well as wooded areas, will be rejuvenated through controlled burns. The board will consider grazing in certain areas as a potential management tool. 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.

#### 14. Owego Wetland Complex

This 1,330-acre area is 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.

New cement pads for the pump were poured at each well head to make it easier to attach and level the pump which is a portable unit on wheels [powered by a diesel motor. One of the drainage ditches was cleaned out this fiscal year as well.



15. 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 and Nature Scape Playground.

The nature center was featured as one of Sioux City's "jewels" in a community perception review presentation by consultant Roger Brooks in 2016. Particularly noted was the welcoming signage and staff. The trails on each side of the nature center were surfaced with concrete, as well as the trail from the water feature out to the playscape. All of these were poured to ADA access.

Work in the spring of 2023 to the ground west of the parking lot and north of the gardens was built up with soil to a higher level, a retaining wall poured, fenced and a picnic shelter installed, making that area more useable and a place to gather. A dog waterer and drinking fountain was installed as well on the east side of the Nature Center and was made possible from donations from private individuals. The after-hours bathroom that was installed in part of the coatroom area was completed and opened for public use. This bathroom is open to the outside and provides restrooms for after hours for the users of the trails and playscape areas.

After reviewing staff recommendations on nature center rentals, the board decided to change from hourly rental rates to strictly half-day or full-day rentals. We would not do two half-day rentals the same day as it would not give staff time to turn the rental around with cleaning and setting up etc. Rentals will also start no earlier than 9:00 AM thus giving staff time to get things ready.

16. 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.

A 120-acre addition adjacent to the south side of this property was acquired in October 2016 and dedicated on November 12 at the site. The Upper Sioux Community Tribal Historic Preservation Officer was contracted to conduct a cultural resources survey which was completed in April 2017.

17. 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 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.

Additional sections of fence will be replaced or constructed to control unauthorized traffic and delineate property boundaries. 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.



18. Peters Pit

Peters Pit was doubled in size by an agreement between the Secondary Roads Department and the Woodbury County Conservation Board. The Engineers department would get all the gravel and would leave 500 ton of road gravel behind for use of the conservation department. Work has been done to level and seed the area, and it will be open for fishing and picnicking.



## VIII. DOROTHY PECAUT NATURE CENTER



### **Annual Report July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024**

**Woodbury County  
Conservation Board  
4500 Sioux River Road  
Sioux City, IA 51109-1657  
712-258-0838**

<https://www.woodburyparks.org>

#### **Highlights**

- Mariah Myers was hired for our Naturalist II position. She has 10 years of experience in the field and led over 80 people on her first public program, a Night Hike. Mary Lou Guthridge was hired for our part-time Office Clerk position.
- Volunteer Coordinator & Receptionist, Betty West, retired in January 2024 after 16 years of service. Shelby Campbell was hired in March 2024 to fill this position.

- Visitation and programming continue to be our focus. Summer camps were filled with waiting lists. Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 field trip seasons were extremely busy. Our public programs and events were well attended. Night Hikes, Coffee & Conservation Programs, Meet the Animals, Outdoor Yoga, and Monarch Tagging were some of the favorite public programs.



- WCCF and DPNC hosted Snakes on the Plains: Surviving a Harsh Environment program in February 2024 with 75 people attending. Daniel Fogell, Herpetologist and Instructor at Southeast Community College in Lincoln, NE presented.
- The Annual Nature Calls Fundraiser in September 2023 was held at the Sioux City Convention Center with 550 people in attendance. This was the 19<sup>th</sup> annual event. The net profit from the event totaled \$37,480.46.
- WCCB received funding for a quarter time AmeriCorps member (450 hours). This is the fourth year WCCB has been awarded AmeriCorps funds. The 2022-2023 quarter time member Grace Perrin worked with us May 2023-August 2023 to assist with summer and youth programming.

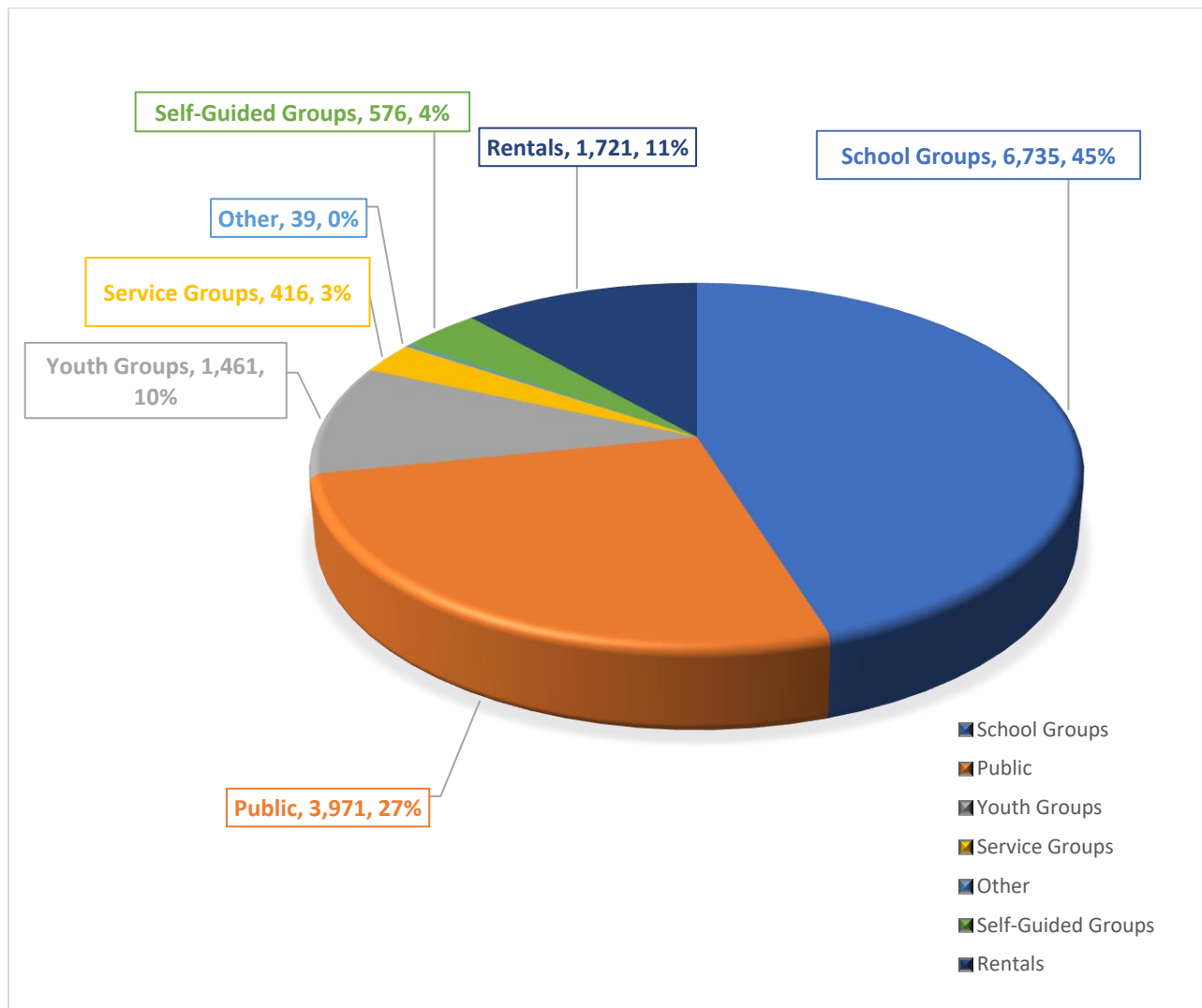


- WCCF provided funds for one seasonal naturalist and a 4-member Conservation Corps of Iowa crew to provide habitat restoration on the prairie ridges at the Nature Center.
- The Outdoor Learning Shelter landscaping was completed and an outdoor accessible restroom was added. This was made possible from the Karen Juhl bequest, MRHD & BNSF grants, CF Industries donation, Siouxland Big Give donations, and private donations.
- A replica tree aviary was constructed for our education ambassador Screech Owl, Lucia. This one-of-a-kind exhibit mimics a Bur Oak snag and provides a comfortable space for the owl to live and educate the public.
- In April 2024, we hosted a taco bar celebration to honor our volunteers. Prudy Deck was presented with the Conservation Educator award for 2023, and Gary LeMoine was given the Friend of Conservation honor for 2023.



## 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 positive learning experiences, our staff is committed to engaging in all levels with experiential and interactive activities. Community partnership programs included Ponca Expo School Day, Celebrate Siouxland, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and the Woodbury County Fair.





## 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. We offered 143 public programs with 3,971 people attending. Popular programs included youth kayaking, Meet the Animals, Campfire Programs, Nature Tales, Native Plant programs, and Yoga classes. The highlights of the year were our Fall Fest and Winter Fun Day events. New in 2023 were Homeschool family programs and a Prairie Seed Harvest program.



**School Groups:** DPNC is a field trip site for preschool through college students. The Center's staff provides resources, materials, and curriculum supplements for teachers to enhance the learning process of their students. Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 field trip seasons were very busy and introduced students to the outdoors at the Nature Center and our county parks.



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 tristate area. Our direct school programs increased to over 6,700 youth through 125 programs. Self-guided school visits to the Nature Center reached 576 students in the last year. We have been increasing the number of county school visits and have made great connections with Woodbury Central and Westwood school districts.

**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 tristate area use our facility for meetings, classes, and field studies.

**Youth Camps & Programs:** The DPNC has offered Summer Day Camps since 1997. In 2023, we offered 17 camps reaching nearly 250 children ages 3 to 12. Summer Naturalist interns and the AmeriCorps Naturalist member provide vital assistance for teaching our summer camps and programs. They offered a variety of programs including live animal presentations, youth fishing, youth canoeing and kayaking, and trail hikes. Two-Day camps and multiple youth programs were cancelled at the end of June 2024 due to flooding and road closures.

On-site programming is available for schools, youth, civic and community groups throughout the year. Staff utilize materials within our teaching collection and our live animal ambassadors. Native American Youth, ESL youth, scouts, 4-H groups, community libraries, and others often request special programs from our staff. We reached over 1,400 youth during our programs this year, mostly attributed to the summer programming by our seasonal naturalists and the AmeriCorps naturalist.







**Service-Learning Groups/Volunteers:** GIS Resource Technician Tyler Flammang had the opportunity to work with multiple service groups over the last year including business, church, school and scout groups. Service groups worked on trail maintenance, landscaping, roadside cleanup, and prairie rescue. This offers a good opportunity for people to help their community and learn about their natural areas at the same time. Volunteers assisted with a large variety of tasks including gardening, office assistance, and program help.

**Service Group Programs:** Programming is also offered for groups, such as Garden Clubs, Sertoma Clubs, Rotary, etc. throughout the year. A total of 416 people were reached through these meetings.

**Casual Visitors:** DPNC is open to the public from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Tuesday through Saturday and 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm on Sunday (May 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>) and closed on Monday. Areas of interest include hiking trails through native prairie and woodlands, wildlife viewing area, interpretive displays including an interactive badger in a tunnel under the prairie diorama, working beehive, a 400-gallon native fish aquarium, resident education animals, and butterfly and herb gardens. The Raptor House and Nature Playscape brings in additional visitors. An estimated 19,191 people visited the Nature Center last year. We know more people visit than are counted and this number could be significantly higher. The Nature Center was closed from June 23-27, 2024, due to the Big Sioux River flooding that closed Hwy 12 for multiple days. Thankfully, no damage was done to the Nature Center property.

### **Grants:**

The DPNC and WCCF applied for five grants during this period, receiving a total of \$19,426.00. Total amount requested was \$22,826.00.

<b><u>Grants July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024</u></b>	<b><u>Amount requested</u></b>	<b><u>Amount received</u></b>	<b><u>Project Targeted</u></b>
AmeriCorps 4-H EE	Quarter Time member	Quarter Time member (\$1,950 match)	Environmental Ed programs
INHF	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	Outdoor Playscape
Gilchrist Foundation	\$18,426.00	\$18,426.00	Screech Owl Aviary & Prairie Root Display
Iowa Ornithologist Union	\$1,000.00	\$0	Screech Owl Aviary
Safari Club International	\$2,400.00	\$0	Binoculars for Educational Programming
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$22,826.00</b>	<b>\$19,426.00</b>	

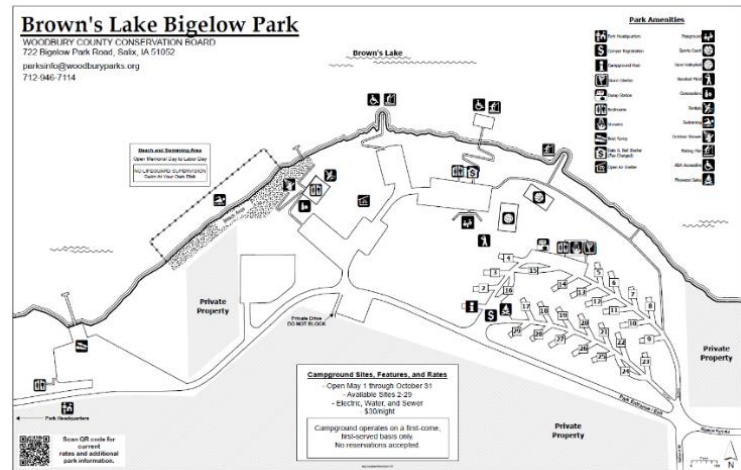
## Nature Center

### Resource Management and

**Maintenance:** Tyler Flammang, GIS Resource Technician, has spent time upgrading our Trail maps using GIS software. He also worked on new campground maps for Little Sioux Park, Brown's Lake Bigelow Park, and Southwood Conservation Area were created. The campground map for Snyder Bend is in progress and a trail map for the Southwood Conservation



Area is nearing completion. All campground maps are styled like the example here of Brown's Lake Bigelow Park.



Projects surrounding the Nature Center have included the completion of the Karen Juhl Outdoor Learning Shelter and the addition of a 24-hour accessible restroom for public use. Many visitors hike the trails or visit the Nature Playscape. These two features have been very popular, and we have received many compliments for their addition.

The Nature Playscape was originally installed in 2013. It is utilized by thousands of children annually and regular maintenance is required. Its fall surface, the ground, is always in a state of decay as it is covered with engineered woodchips. The chips are specifically required for a playground of this type.

This year, volunteers with CF Industries as well as DPNC staff worked together to spread several truckloads of these engineered chips across the Playscape's area.

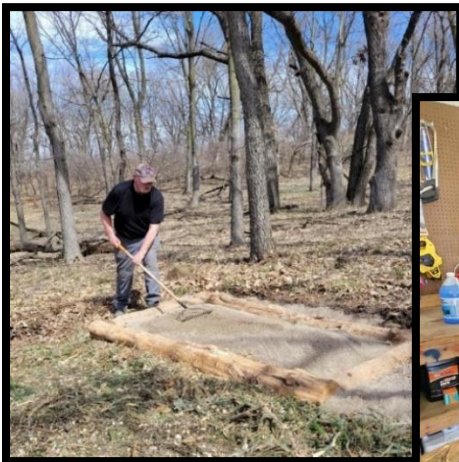
The playscape was our 2023 Siouxland Big Give project. Funds were raised to replace the Spider Web, add an Akambira (wooden xylophone), and a climbing boulder. Additional funds were raised at Nature Calls 2023, received through an INHF grant, and private donations.

Students from Heelan High School chose DPNC for their volunteer service day. The task presented to them was to assist DPNC staff with staining park benches and the Kestrel Point overlook deck.





**Trails:** A major upgrade to the DPNC trail system this year was the installation of water bars on select sections of trails. For years general trail maintenance included the need to shovel mud from stairs. In these areas, during heavy rain events, water would collect and flow down the trail itself, then cascade over the stairs below, dropping soil and debris along the way. A Conservation Corps of Iowa crew was hired to assist DPNC staff with the installation of several water bars throughout the trail system. These bars, which are hardwood tree trunks of various sizes, are buried slightly into the soil, approximately 45° or greater across the trail section, and staked at the ends to prevent movement. With the bar buried slightly into the soil, water is prevented from undermining the feature. The angle of the bar in relation to the trail effectively diverts the water off the trail and out into the surrounding forest, preventing further erosion of the trail and the dumping of mud on the trail steps.



A great addition to the Bur Oak Bluff trail, that connects the DPNC trail system to the Stone State Park trail system, was the addition of a natural log bench. This bench installation idea was brought to the DPNC staff by volunteer Gary Lemoine. Mr. Lemoine has invested many volunteer hours at DPNC. He assisted DPNC staff with the development of the Bur Oak Bluff trail itself and continues to regularly volunteer his time to help upkeep all our trails. His idea for the location of this bench along Bur Oak Bluff was to have it be situated at the apex of the trail's elevation profile. Whether one hikes the trail from south to north or north to south, there is one clear peak of the trail's profile. This is where Mr. Lemoine suggested the bench be located. DPNC and Stone State Park staff agreed on the style, location, and installation of the bench and work commenced. Special thanks need to be given to WCCB employee Josh VanVoorst for assistance with cutting the raw log in half. Mr. Lemoine assisted greatly with the construction and installation and regularly seals the bench with wood protection to provide years of service.

**Trees:** WCCB and Woodbury County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) partners to bring trees to 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Woodbury Co. SWCD coordinates the program and distributes the trees to participating Woodbury County school districts. WCCB cost-shares this program at 50/50 cost. Naturalist, Kari Sandage, assisted with programs at several schools and assisted with distribution of the trees.

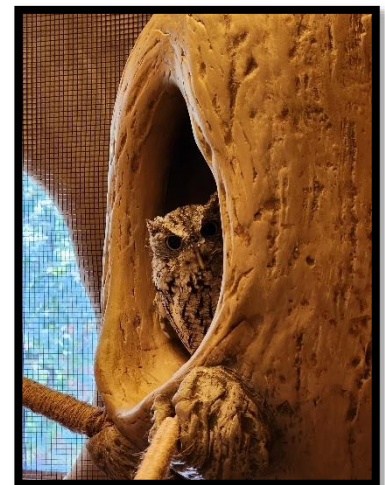


**Exhibits:** A custom-designed oak tree enclosure was installed indoors at the Nature Center for Lucia the Screech Owl. Theresa Kruid and Tyler Flammang assisted with the design idea for a hollow tree aviary. They worked with Brown Knows Designs (BKD) to complete the design and fabricate the tree. Jeff Brown and Ashley Wereley with BKD were great to work with and made great efforts to make the one-of-a-kind tree a comfortable home and exhibit. This project was made possible through grants from the Gilchrist Foundation, The Loess Hills Audubon Society, and many private donations.

**Animal Ambassadors & Raptor Enclosure:** DPNC houses three snakes, four box turtles, and two raptors that are educational ambassadors. The animals are used for educational programs for schools, youth, camps, and the public. In the past year, they were used for over 160 programs, reaching over 13,500 participants. These animals help make connections to the natural world and assist in getting our message to the community.

The Raptor House is a highlight for many visitors and allows them an up close and personal experience with animals that are otherwise distant and elusive. Our live educational raptors include Lucia, an Eastern Screech Owl and Harlan, and a Barred Owl. These birds were acquired from Kay Neumann, director of a non-profit raptor rehabilitation & education facility called Saving Our Avian Resources (SOAR). These birds are on permanent display and many visitors see them and learn about them through displays.

The turtles and owls were removed from the Nature Center for a few days due to closure from the 2024 flood. Mariah Myers and Dorothy Shamblen removed them before the road closed and Myers cared for them during this time.



## Marketing

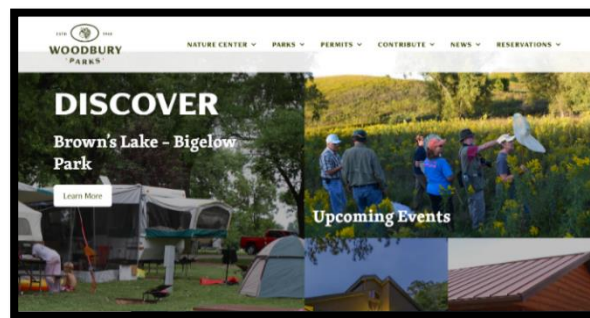
A positive relationship is maintained with local media. The naturalists participated in many interviews for radio, television, and newspapers during the past year.

**Woodbury Wanderings Newsletter:** Our newsletter has transitioned to an online only format. Bi-monthly to monthly versions of the newsletter are emailed with MailChimp. Programming and project information is shared through this format. Interested subscribers are encouraged to request their newsletter online.



**Web Page:** <<https://www.woodburyparks.org>>

The improved website is more streamlined and includes an interactive map of our park areas, beautiful photos, updated information, video clips of the cabins, shelters and nature center and the ability to donate online to the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation.



**Social Media:** We use Facebook and Instagram daily to share information and events. Naturalist, Kari Sandage coordinates our posts and events on these platforms. Our Facebook page is updated live on the main page of our website, to attract new users. Our YouTube page is used to post educational videos and share that content. We add occasional videos and recordings mostly from our adult programming. Facebook remains the top way for us to announce events, programs and general information.

**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. We had 66 total groups use the facility for a total of 1,721 people.

**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 items from local artists such as handmade cards and jewelry. All proceeds from the shop go to the Nature Center.

**Staff:** DPNC has seven staff dedicated to the operation and programs of the facility. Theresa Kruid serves as the Education Director and head Naturalist and has been with WCCB/DPNC for 27 years. She has more than 30 years of experience in the interpretation field and holds a BS degree in Recreation and Park Management (Environmental Interpretation and Outdoor Education emphasis) from Pennsylvania State University. Kruid developed DPNC's successful summer day camp program, as well as organizes annual program events, a multitude of school programs and field trips and oversees the care of our animal ambassadors. Kruid also coordinates the annual fundraiser, Nature Calls, writes grants, and oversees marketing for programs.

Kari Sandage began as a full-time naturalist in October 2020. She has a BA degree in Environmental Studies and Spanish from Central College and a MS degree in Environmental Science (emphasis in Conservation Biology) from Antioch University New England. She has 8 years of experience in the interpretation field. Kari helps to coordinate and lead educational programs, oversees our electronic marketing, and assists with other responsibilities. Mariah Myers started in July 2023 as our Naturalist II. Myers grew up in a small town in west central Illinois, about 30 minutes from Burlington, Iowa. She has a BS degree in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University. Since 2014, she has held various roles in environmental education, including an AZA-accredited drive-thru wildlife park in Texas, nature centers in Wisconsin and Illinois, and a small zoo in Illinois. Mariah's role is leading educational programs, care of our animal ambassadors, and assisting with other operations.

Tyler Flammang, Geographical Information System (GIS) Technician, has 9 years of experience at WCCB. He has an associate degree from Western Iowa Tech Community College. His duties include GIS mapping, resource management, building, and grounds maintenance. Flammang continues to be an integral part of special events, seasonal employee training, building projects and mapping for our trails.





DPNC Support staff include 2 part-time receptionists, Pam Pfautsch (28 years) and Dorothy Shamblen (one year). Part-time Volunteer Coordinator/Receptionist, Betty West retired in January 2024 after 16 years. Shelby Campbell was hired in March 2024 as our new part-time Volunteer Coordinator/Receptionist. Campbell has worked in multiple non-profit organizations in Siouxland and is active in the community. These women are vital to the success of DPNC.

In 2023, WCCB received funding from the 4-H AmeriCorps Environmental Education Programs for one AmeriCorps naturalist—a quarter time member for 450 hours. Cash match for this grant was a total of \$1,950.

Summer staff for 2023 were Tahlia Deitloff, Madalyn Derochie, and Madi Leuer serving as Summer Naturalists. Grace Perrin served as the quarter time (450 hours) AmeriCorps naturalist. WCCF paid the wages for one of our summer naturalists in 2023. Jack Wolfe was hired as part-time Summer Maintenance Worker, a shared position with Stone State Park. He worked two days a week at DPNC and 3 days a week at Stone Park into August 2024. Summer Naturalist Interns for Summer 2024 were Carlie Benton, Tahlia Deitloff, Emma Dahlhoff, and Rachel Sadler. We continued a seasonal shared position with Stone State Park for a part-time Summer Maintenance Worker. Klayton Warden was hired for this position and worked two days a week at DPNC and 3 days a week at Stone State Park.



We also participate in the Senior Employment (SCSEP) program. Sandra Downs serves as our part-time Nature Center Host. She started in June 2022. This is a federally funded training program for seniors to get back into the work force.

**Training/Professional Development:** The DPNC is committed to professional development, and interpretive staff participate in the IAN Annual Professional Development program. Kari Sandage and Mariah Myers attended the Fall 2023 IAN workshop in Carroll County. Theresa Kruid, Kari Sandage and Mariah Myers attended the Spring IAN workshop that was incorporated with NAI (National Association of Interpreters) in April 2024 in Council Bluffs, IA. Our education staff were able to attend this national workshop thanks to a grant from IAN/REAP. Kruid attended multiple Siouxland Philanthropy learning sessions and Siouxland Chamber of Commerce sessions. The support staff are trained in computer software, First Aid, CPR, and other services vital to their jobs. Other training courses were online, and staff participated in numerous webinars and virtual workshops to increase their knowledge.

**Volunteers:** During the following months, July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024, volunteers contributed more than 2,200 hours of volunteer service which translates to an estimated \$41,248.00. Support staff at the Nature Center and WCCB is comprised of approximately 122 non-paid volunteers, 13 of these being Junior Volunteers under the age of 18 and several service groups. Volunteer duties include animal care, gardening, reception & clerical, summer camp naturalist assistant, prairie rescue, educational, curatorial, special events, research, trail maintenance, bird feeding, program assistance, fund raising, campground hosts and general maintenance. Our annual volunteer recognition event was held in April 2024 for the previous year's volunteers. Gary LeMoine and

Helen Anderson were recognized for the highest number of hours. Carlie Benton and Emily Martin were also recognized as the junior volunteer for the most hours. Prudy Deck was presented with the Conservation Educator award for 2023, and Gary LeMoine was given the Friend of Conservation honor for 2023.

**The volunteers for 2023-2024 are as follows:**

Amy Anderson	Carol Heissel	Kathy Pfautsch
Helen Anderson	Hannah Heissel	Brianna Pike
Jim Anderson	Sue Hinrichs	Rich Pope
Matt Anderson	Chris Jackson	Donna Popp
Audie Baughman	Chuck Johnson	Linda Rhinehart
Julie Baughman	Barb Johnson	Jesse Ridgway
Madalyn Baughman	Dean Johnson	Kelly Ridgway
Tykeesha Beauchene	Katy Jones	Pam Ridgway
Olivia Benjamin	Katy Karrer	Ty Ridgway
Cindy Bennett	Hannah Kobold	Dianne Roach
Carlie Benton	Tiana Kruid	Becky Roemmich
Olivia Bentson	Braden Kumm	Ruth Rose
Jeanne Bockholt	Gary LeMoine	Norb Ruhland
Carol Boellstorff	Marjorie Lessman	Annie Ruhler-Johnson
CF Industries	Marlin Lessman	Kyle Sandage
Mike Campbell	Steve Lieber	Catherine Saulsbury
Val Campbell	Tom Limoges	Nolan Schmeckpepper
Abby Castaneda	Bianca Llamas	Anne Shaner
Juan Castaneda	Denise Lopez	Ellen Shaner
Mary Crawford	Jax Lopez	Mary Siepker
Kandi Custer	Emily Martin	Barb Small
Dawn Daily	Mary McGuire	Kerry Small
Tally Deitloff	Susan McGuire	Mike Smith
Dylan DeMoss	Robert Meis	Vicki Smith
Dennis Derochie	Alexandra Meyers	Dawn Snyder
Madalyn Derochie	Chris Meyers	Justine Sponder
Mike Donovan	Marilyn Milbrodt	Beth Stockfleth
Adelynn Elgert	Bruce Miller	Neil Stockfleth
Fletcher Farrer	Judy Miller	Mike Swanson
Kim Friessen	Candice Nash	Bob Sweeney
Katlyn Froistad	John Nash	Rod Tondreau
Anita Gaswint	Red Nash	Michelle Wallace
Roger Gaswint	Barb Nixon	Carly West
Aaron Gehling	Megen Noll	Gina West
Kylie Guerra	Jeff Olson	WIT Volleyball Team
Barb Hageman	Laura Pecaut	Lily Wilford
Dennis Hageman	Grace Perrin	Michelle Willsie
Lori Harder	Annie Peterson	Eric Wissing
Brian Hazlett	Mark Peterson	Bill Zales
Heelan High School	Walt Peterson	Chris Zellmer-Zant

## Volunteer Contributed Services July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Category	Hours	\$/Hour	Total
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### Education/Interpretive (information services, docents, teachers, etc.)

Animal Care (4)	89.5	\$14.00	\$1,253.00
Camp Assistant (5)	58	\$11.00	\$638.00
Naturalist Assistant (9)	71	\$15.00	\$1,065.00
Campground Hosts (3)	480	\$20.00	\$9,600.00
Special Events (153)	505	\$15.00	\$7,575.00

### Administrative/Clerical/Maintenance (office, routine maintenance, etc.)

Clerical (4)	129	\$17.00	\$2,193.00
Maintenance (27)	91	\$15.00	\$1,365.00
Trail Maintenance (7)	399.5	\$20.00	\$7,990.00

### Curatorial/Collections (research, gardens, care of objects, etc.)

Gardening (4)	23.5	\$14.00	\$329.00
Garden Consultants (2)	4	\$25.00	\$100.00

### Professional (legal, fundraising, guest speakers, consultants, etc.)

Fundraising Special Events (16)	237	\$25.00	\$5,925.00
Auctioneers (3)	9	\$50.00	\$450.00
Consultants (4)	38.5	\$50.00	\$1,925.00
Photography (1)	6	\$50.00	\$300.00
Veterinary Service (1)	6	\$90.00	\$540.00

<b>Totals</b>	<b>Hours 3,126</b>		<b>\$57,584.00</b>
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## Special Projects

### Fundraising—Nature Calls

The annual *Nature Calls*—beer sampling, nature art sale and auction— was another success. We had just over 550 people attend this year and raised over \$73,000 gross receipts. This was the highest grossing event. After expenses our net profit was \$37,480.46. \$2,300 was designated for the Outdoor Nature Playscape project leaving \$35,180.46. This was split three ways for the following:

40% for Nature Center programs/projects	(\$14,072.18)
30% for seasonal staff	(\$10,554.14)
30% for Nature Center maintenance fund	(\$10,554.14)

### Woodbury County Conservation Foundation

October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024	WCCF Memberships
24 Individual Memberships	\$ 659.74
22 Family Memberships	\$ 808.32
18 Wildlife Conservationist Memberships	\$ 931.34
39 Woodland Conservationist Memberships	\$ 5,070.04
7 Prairie Conservationist Memberships	\$ 1,871.53
7 Wetland Conservationist Memberships	\$ 3,300.00
2 Distinguished Conservationist Membership	\$ 6,000.00
<b>119 Memberships</b>	<b>\$ 18,640.97</b>
<b>Donation Preference Breakout:</b>	
To Help Further WCCF's Mission	\$ 7,298.33
For Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center Support & Camps	\$ 4,208.12
For Loess Hills Area Habitat Support	\$ 5,790.00
For Woodbury County Park Enhancements	\$ 829.52
In honor or memory of others	\$ 515.00
<b>Total Memberships</b>	<b>\$ 18,640.97</b>



The WCCB maintains a close relationship with the Conservation Foundation (WCCF). Theresa Kruid is a staff representative and assists with the Foundations Treasurer and Secretarial duties.

WCCF hosted its annual meeting in February 2024, followed by a public program, Snakes on the Plains: Surviving a Harsh Environment presented by Daniel Fogell, Herpetologist and

Instructor at Southeast Community College in Lincoln, NE. Nature Center. The event was held at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center with 75 people attending. The presentation was also recorded and shared on our YouTube channel.

The Foundation typically co-sponsors the Conservation Board Summer Day Camps and the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar. WCCF funded a Summer Naturalist Intern and a Conservation Corps of Iowa crew to provide habitat restoration on the prairie ridge above the Nature Center. They continue conservation education and natural area protection in our area. The minutes of WCCF meetings are on file at the WCCB Office.

Current members of the WCCF Board of Directors are Rich Pope, President; Norbert Ruhland, Vice President; Robert Meis, Secretary; Pam Ridgway, Treasurer; Dr. Brian Hazlett; Chris Jackson; Theresa Kruid, Anne Shaner; Dr. Jim Stroh, Rod Tondreau, and Christine Zellmer-Zant. Online donations can be received via a PayPal account, allowing more revenues to donate. WCCF is the channeling agency for the Nature Calls fundraiser and is the vehicle for transferring large donations, grants and memorials to the Woodbury County Conservation Board.

## **Endowment**

In May 2012, the WCCF established an endowment fund within the Siouxland Community Foundation. This gives 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. The WCCF received one endowment gift this past year totaling \$500.00. The end of fiscal year balance of the WCCF Endowment within the Siouxland Community Foundation was \$48,949.47.

**Siouxland Big Give:** WCCF participated in their fifth year of this online fundraising event. We advertised the funds would be used for new elements at the Nature Playscape at the Nature Center. We received 20 gifts for a total of \$1749.00. We replaced the web and added a climbing boulder for kids to play on. Additional funds for this project were obtained through grants and donations.

## **List of Donors**

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

### **General & Cash Donations**

Jack & Barbara Aalfs  
Jamie Beyer  
CF Industries, Brenda Godfredson  
Lawrence & Juliann Delperdang  
Teresa Dibble-Eichmann  
Jeff & Shay Gebauer  
Sally Hartley  
Rosemary Kuehne  
Gary LeMoine

Mahoney-Hill Trust, Norman Mahoney  
Sandra Nation  
Anne Nelson  
Judy Pierce  
Scheels, Lexi Mounts  
Anne Shaner  
The Storm Family  
Dolly Varner  
Bill Zales

### **Memorial Gifts**

We received an assortment of memorial gifts this past year from a variety of donors. These funds were used for projects such as the Screech Owl aviary, trail benches, exhibit enhancements, The Tale Trail and educational programs.

#### **LaVonne Corio Baker Memorial:**

Linda Lee Thompson  
Mark & Susan Nielsen

#### **Connie Bledsoe Memorial:**

Linda L. Healy  
Dawn Snyder

#### **Gracia Davenport Memorial:**

Kay Jipp

#### **Loy “Greg” Dunn Memorial:**

Dawn Snyder  
Loyanne Jensen

#### **Greg Ellerbroek Memorial:**

William & Judy Boust  
Angie Ellerbroek  
Charles & Linda Lanphier  
Shellie Lorenzen

#### **Dr. Paul Fee Memorial:**

Dawn Snyder



**Bernice Hughes Memorial:**

Ken &amp; Kris Girard

**Kev Koskovich Memorial:**

Dawn Snyder

**David Meis Memorial:**

John Gray

Theresa Kruid

Pam Pfautsch

**Dr. Robert Powell Memorial:**

Dawn Snyder

**Joe Roach Memorial:**

Dennis &amp; Rita Vannatta

**Jim Swanson Memorial:**

Dawn Snyder

**Gary Shaner Memorial:**

Audie &amp; Julie Baughman

William &amp; Dianne Blankenship

Barbara Brandt

Roger &amp; Doris Brannan

Carolyn Burnham

Jon &amp; Anne Cleghorn

Nancy Cord

Greg Gregerson

Amy Hauff

Sara Jane Hauff

Marvin &amp; Karen Heidman

Duane &amp; Peggy Hoffmeyer

Kevin &amp; Marla Kerr

Jim &amp; Sherry Kitchell

Theresa Kruid

Susan Lambing

Jeanne McCallum

Vince &amp; Sherry McGill

Robert &amp; Holly Meis

Colleen Mosher

Jeff Olson &amp; Nancy Shulenberger

John Pendleton

Eric &amp; Pam Pfautsch

Rex &amp; Maria Rundquist

John &amp; Patricia Scherrman

Gary &amp; Judy Schindel

Ronald &amp; Corky Scott

Anne Shaner

Dawn Snyder

Susan Spooner

Sue &amp; Steve Struthers

Bill &amp; Dotty Zales

**Animal Adoptions Donors**

The Nature Center received \$1,195.00 in donations for animal adoptions. These funds help provide food, bedding, housing and care for the resident educational animals and our birdfeeders.

Lawerence &amp; Juliann

Delperdang

Dan &amp; Sally Hartley

McKenna Hartley

Paxton Hartley

Loyanne Jensen

Gary LeMoine

Robert &amp; Holly Meis

Alex Uhl Family

Marc &amp; Tracy Vander Wilt

Jason D. Wolfe

**Big Give Donors**

The Nature Center received \$1,749.00 from the Siouxland Big Give that was dedicated to our Outdoor Playscape.

Anonymous

Jim Anderson

Cindy Bennett

Jeanette Bobeen

Colin Brandt

Mindee Brown

Dan Heissel

Mitch Hessman

Carissa Hindman

Dennis Kluver

George Kueny

Mark &amp; Susan Nielsen

Scott &amp; Cynthia Patten

Anne Shaner

Dawn Snyder

## Nature Calls 2023 Auction Donors

Adaville Honey Co., Dean & Barbara Johnson  
 Artery, Julia & Peter Licht  
 Autumn Prairie Designs, Jana Sawin-Peterson  
 Axe to Grind  
 B & B Cleaning, Corey Brand  
 Big Frig, Brock Hutchinson  
 Blue Ox Spirits, Rudy Pineda  
 Blue Tin Ranch, Noreen Jorgensen  
 Bob Roe's North End Zone, Jason & Jerry  
 Bob Roe's Point After, Terri & Bob Roe  
 Book People  
 Briar Cliff University Athletics, Susie  
 Bridgeview Family Dental  
 Bud & Mary's, Jessica Small  
 Buff City Soap  
 Buffalo Alice, Heather Poncelot  
 Courtyard by Marriott, Jacki Dodds  
 Culver's on Hamilton Blvd, Lori Stewart  
 Davenport Cleaners  
 El Fredo's Pizza, Mark Lennon  
 Expansion Center  
 Famous Dave's, Elijahuan Muhammad  
 Fareway Stores, Inc.  
 Fleet Farm  
 Greenberg's Jewelers, Elise Greenberg  
 Gunderson's Jewelers, Brian & Kathy  
 Gunderson  
 Habitat Woodworking, Jeff & Nancy Olson  
 Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sioux City, Jackie Zobel  
 Heelan, Tom Betz  
 Hershey Chocolate Company, Loyanne Jensen  
 High Ground Coffee  
 Hot Worx, Katie McWilliams  
 Jack's Uniforms & Equipment, Dale Vitito  
 Jackson Street Brewing, Dave Winslow  
 Jefferson Beer Supply, Nicki  
 Kenneth Keith Artworks, Kenneth Keith  
 Lamb Theatre, Lindsay Washburn  
 Loess Hills Wild Ones, Marcie Ponder  
 Marx Trailer, Dave Marx  
 Midbell Music, Mike Guntren  
 Milwaukee Weiner House, John & Mike Eliades  
 Mindie's Salon & Spa, Mindie Selchert  
 Morningside University Athletics  
 Morningside University Inside store  
 MW Glass & Other Works, Marit Westrich  
 North Sioux Dental Clinic  
 Old Chicago, Jeff Carlson  
 Palmer Candy Co., Brenda Huls  
 Perry Way Bouquet, Becky Carlson

Pizza Ranch in Leeds  
 Pizza Ranch in Sergeant Bluff  
 Ponca State Park, Scott Oligmueller  
 Premier Glazer's Beer & Beverage, Steffanie Danke  
 Rascals Beer Brewing Club, Bill Zales  
 Sam's Club, Heather Thompson  
 Scheels All Sports, Lexi Mounts  
 Seaboard Triumph Foods, Erin Cantrell  
 Shady Grove Pottery, Chaeli Kohn  
 Sioux City Musketeers, Travis Morgan  
 Sioux City Parks & Recreation, John Byrnes  
 Sioux City Symphony, Trinetta Patterson  
 Siouxland Fly Fishing Club, Bob Gillespie  
 Small Town Sportsman, Dave Riemenschneider  
 Snowflake Woods, Lynn Jarvis  
 Starbucks, Shala Severson  
 Texas Roadhouse  
 The Black Box Bakery, Jean Marie Althaus  
 The Nature Conservancy - Broken Kettle Grasslands, Scott Moats & James Baker  
 The Orpheum Theatre  
 The Shooting Shop, Bob Farmer  
 The Spot Espresso Bar & Café, Stephanie Cacioppo & Jennifer Hart  
 The Sugar Shack Bakery, Claudia Hessa  
 Thornson Drug, Steph Petersen  
 Transcending Yoga, Chan Follen  
 Tyson Events Center  
 Waddy's Whistle Stop  
 Warrior Hotel, Sharon Skinner  
 Wellness Works Massage, Jeanne Thune  
 Wheelock & Bursick Dentistry  
 Mary Jane Africa  
 Stewart Bass  
 Cindy Bennett  
 Carol Bickel  
 Molly Boatman  
 Cecelia Carlson  
 Randy & Steph Chapman  
 Janet Dorale  
 Aaron & Emilee Gehling  
 Britton Hacke  
 Randy & Pat Hanson  
 Bruce & Jeannette Hopkins  
 Kev & Kathy Koskovich  
 Jeff & Theresa Kruid  
 Rosie Kuehne  
 Dr. Steve & Jane Merritt  
 Brenda Nelson  
 Dr. Robert & Phyll Powell



Jean Rhinehart  
Jesse Ridgway  
Kelly & Pam Ridgway  
Ty Ridgway  
Dr. Patrick & Catherine Saulsbury  
Vicky Schuldt  
Gary & Anne Shaner

Mary Siepker  
Dawn Snyder  
Brian & Heather Stehr  
Neil & Beth Stockfleth  
Scott Toben  
Ronald Yockey & Connie Richardson-Smith  
Bill & Dotty Zales

## **Nature Calls 2023 Sponsors**

### **White-tailed Deer Sponsors**

BAIRD—The Holzrichter Morrison Group  
F&M Bank  
Hy-Vee  
Johnston Excavating  
KCAU 9 News  
Dan & Kay Pecaut  
Powell Broadcasting  
Sioux City Journal & Weekender  
Ronald Yockey & Connie Richardson Smith

### **Bald Eagle Sponsors**

Dr. Chad & Lindsay Laurich  
Dr. Luis Lebrede & Ruth M. Rose  
MidAmerican Energy  
State Steel  
WestRock

### **Bobcat Sponsors**

Central Bank  
Chesterman Company  
Farrell's Heating & Air Conditioning  
GELITA USA INC  
JEO Consulting Group  
Dr. Steve & Jane Merritt  
People's Bank  
Kelly & Pam Ridgway  
Siouxland Animal Hospital PC  
TNT Sales & Service, LLC

### **Falcon Contributors**

Anonymous  
Mike Barkley Business LLC  
Gene & Cindy Bennett  
Bud & Mary's  
Certified Auto Inc.  
Certified Testing Services, Inc.  
CMBA Architects  
CW Suter Services  
Don & Jane Dixon  
Echo Electric Supply  
Fouk Brothers Plumbing & Heating Co.  
John C. & Di Gray  
Great Southern Bank  
Great West Casualty Company  
Jolly Time Pop Corn

L & L Builders Co.  
Landscape Designs  
Lieber Construction, Inc.  
Tom & Crista Limoges  
Robert & Holly Meis  
Midstates Bank, N.A.  
Rising Stars Dance LLC  
Security National Corporation  
Sooland Bobcat  
Thompson Solutions Group  
United Real Estate Solutions—Christine  
Zellmer-Zant  
Vitus CPAs  
Wells Enterprises, Inc.

### **Bluebird Contributors**

Ag Processing Inc.  
Rocky DeWitt  
Farmers Insurance – Dawn Bratvold Agency  
Dr. Paul & Penny Fee  
FNB Bank  
Marvin & Karen Heidman  
Charles & Lynnette Hoffman  
Jensen Dealerships  
John D. Kiernan, OD  
Knoepfler Chevrolet  
Chris & Sandy Koch  
Legacy Financial, LLC, Gregory G. Giles  
Dr. Stee Maxwell  
Mark & Judy Monson  
North Sioux Dental, Dr. Ryan McKenna  
Sioux Valley Community Credit Union  
Dawn M. Snyder  
Neil & Beth Stockfleth  
United Real Estate Solutions—Kevin A. McManamy

### **Special Thanks**

Madelyn Baughman  
Black Box Bakery  
Blue Ox Spirits  
Candice at KSUX 105.7 FM  
Chesterman Company  
Roger Gaswint, Gaswint Auctioneering

Rae Hattan  
 Jackson Street Brewing  
 Loyanne Jensen – Hershey's  
 Junior League of Sioux City  
 KES Productions  
 L&L Distributing Co., Inc.  
 Marto Brewing Co.  
 Bruce Miller, Sioux City Journal  
 Oscar Carl Vineyard  
 Premier Glazer's Beer & Beverage  
 Record Printing

Sioux City Convention Center  
 Small Town Sportsman – Dave  
 Riemenschneider  
 Smithfield Foods, Inc.  
 Staber Meats  
 The Shooting Shop LLC – Bob Farmer  
 The Sugar Shack Bakery  
 Wise I Brewing Company  
 WITCC Volleyball Team  
 Woodbury County Information &  
 Communications Commission

## Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center

### Staff

Daniel Heissel, *Conservation Board Director*  
 Brian Stehr, *Deputy Director*  
 Theresa Kruid, *Education Director*  
 Kari Sandage, *Naturalist*  
 Mariah Myers, *Naturalist*  
 Tyler Flammang, *GIS Resource Technician*  
 Dawn Bostwick, *Office Manager*  
 Pam Pfautsch, *Part-time Receptionist*  
 Dorothy Shamblen, *Part-time Receptionist*  
 Mary Lou Guthridge, *Part-time Clerk*  
 Betty West, *Part-time Volunteer Coordinator/Receptionist*  
 Shelby Campbell, *Part-time Volunteer Coordinator/Receptionist*  
 Sandra Downs, *Senior Worker*



### Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday 9am – 4:00pm

Sunday 1 – 4:00pm

*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.



**IX. FY '24 FINANCIAL STATEMENT****0001-22 GENERAL CONSERVATION BUDGET****INCOME**

Refunds/Rebates	\$ 26,739.03
Nature Center Rental	3,657.15
Fuel Tax Refunds	5,148.11
Taxation	2,323,760.86
TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$ 2,359,305.15</u>

**EXPENSE**

<b><u>Administration</u></b>	
Department Heads	\$ 134,195.34
Wage Plan Employees	126,638.01
Supervisory	95,059.46
Wage Plan Employees-Part Time	17,999.19
FICA-County Contribution	27,484.88
IPERS-County Contribution	34,997.10
Employee Hospitalization	72,099.79
Life Insurance	153.60
Dental Insurance	1,409.76
LTD Insurance	1,814.92
Food & Provisions	85.33
Gas & Oil	3,068.74
Lubricants	135.89
Tires & Tubes	772.40
Office Supplies	1,114.84
Magazines & Books	441.76
Law Enforcement Equipment	3,368.60
Safety Equipment	124.85
Wearing/Safety Apparel.	848.08
Official Publication & Legals	270.00
Typing, Printing & Binding	3,095.00
Postage & Mailing	883.85
Travel Expenses	1,189.42
AirCard Expense	1,485.72
School of Instruction	560.00
Professional Services	374.41
Medical Fees	400.00
Repair & Maintenance: Vehicles	4,020.86
Contractual Services	998.00
Copier Maintenance Contract	1,466.77
Dues/Memberships	604.90
License & Permits	27.16
Drainage Taxes	10,732.10
Motor Vehicle Purchases	170,738.71
Office Equipment & Furniture	1,106.02
Lease/Purchase Agreement	2,457.80
Computer Software	3,024.68
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 725,247.94</u>



County Parks

Wage Plan Employees	\$ 344,491.12
Supervisory	235,094.53
Temporary Employees	121,628.73
FICA-County Contribution	52,408.20
IPERS-County Contribution	54,882.10
Employee Hospitalization	114,744.37
Life Insurance	329.60
Dental Insurance	3,025.11
LTD Insurance	2,869.85
Chemicals & Gases-Herbicides	4,700.10
Chemicals & Gases-Brush	189.35
Fertilizer & Seed	3,539.63
Custodial Supplies	7,205.78
Gas & Oil	39,827.87
Lubricants	5,222.26
Tires & Tubes	4,146.43
Motor Vehicle Equipment	910.84
Law Enforcement Equipment	10,447.59
Shop Equipment	159.76
Safety Equipment	2,463.48
Arms/Ammunition	3,499.93
Wearing/Safety Apparel	5,485.06
Travel Expenses	1,340.14
Telephone Expense	8,289.53
Cell Phone Expense	5,300.00
AirCard Expense	2,476.20
School of Instruction	4,121.03
Natural & LP Gas	3,849.70
Electric Light & Power	67,035.96
Water & Sewer	3,814.90
Garbage	18,524.75
Repair & Maintenance: Vehicles	2,077.64
Repairs & Maintenance: Buildings & Grounds	41,424.33
Repair & Maintenance: Equipment	46,034.08
Repair & Maintenance: Radio & Related Equipment	1,418.78
Licenses & Permits	533.23
Office Equipment & Furniture	630.98
Minor Equipment & Hand Tools	6,255.79
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 1,230,398.73</u>

Naturalist

Wage Plan Employees	\$ 115,452.75
Supervisory	73,726.39
Wage Plan Employees-Part Time	72,488.27
FICA-County Contribution	19,552.10
IPERS-County Contribution	24,607.74
Employee Hospitalization	32,742.13
Life Insurance	108.80
Dental Insurance	998.58
LTD Insurance	906.56
Food & Provisions	9.48
Gas & Oil	1,501.89
Lubricants	79.96
Office Supplies	66.11
Safety Equipment	185.83
Wearing/Safety Apparel	609.56
Postage & Mailing	60.20

Travel Expenses	945.37
School of Instruction	899.00
Repair & Maintenance: Vehicles	68.93
Dues/Membership	598.54
Computer Software	95.23
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 345,703.42</u>

<u>Nature Center</u>	
Custodial Supplies	\$ 1,311.22
Gas & Oil	564.66
Lubricants	220.54
Tires & Tubes	861.99
Audio Visual Supplies	99.00
Telephone Expense	341.09
Cell Phone Expense	4,590.13
Electric Light & Power	18,050.78
Water & Sewer	156.98
Garbage	841.01
Repairs & Maintenance: Buildings & Grounds	5,688.03
Repairs & Maintenance: Equipment	147.18
Contractual Services	23,729.70
License & Permits	15.00
Minor Equipment & Hand Tools	1,337.75
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 57,955.06</u>

TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 2,359,305.15
APPROVED BUDGET	<u>\$ 2,469,856.12</u>
<b>BALANCE JUNE 30, 2024</b>	<u><b>\$ 110,550.97</b></u>

### **0005 AMERICA RESCUE PLAN ACT**

#### EXPENSES

<u>Conservation Administration</u>	
Buildings	<u>\$ 1,053,736.83</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY24)</i>	<u>\$ 1,053,736.83</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<u><b>\$ 1,053,736.83</b></u>

## **0023 REAP FUND**

### **INCOME**

Per County Allocation received FY 24	\$ 7,776.00
Per Capita Allocations received FY 24	26,159.00
Interest	712.80
TOTAL INCOME <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY24)</i>	<u>\$ 34,647.80</u>

### **EXPENSES**

#### **Administration**

Land Acquisition	\$ -
TOTAL EXPENSES <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY24)</i>	<u>\$ -</u>

<b>NET INCOME/LOSS</b>	<b><u>\$ 34,647.80</u></b>
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FUND CASH BALANCE JULY 1, 2023	\$ 40,741.88
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FUND CASH BALANCE JUNE 30, 2024	\$ 76,598.36
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## **0057 NATURE CENTER**

### **INCOME**

Donations	\$ 75,926.47
Gift Shop Sales	6,986.47
Gilchrist Grant	18,426.00
Program Fees	16,784.95
TOTAL INCOME <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY24)</i>	<u>\$ 118,123.89</u>

### **EXPENSE**

#### **Administration**

Repairs & Maintenance: Buildings & Grounds	\$ 59,926.92
Office Equipment & Furniture	100.00
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 60,026.92</u>

#### **Nature Center Gift Shop**

Promotional Activities	\$ 2,336.20
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 2,336.20</u>

#### **Nature Center Programs**

Temporary Employees	\$ 18,549.36
FICA-County Contribution	1,419.01
Animal Care	4,165.04
Food & Provisions	1,204.81
Program Supplies	3,709.12
Promotional Activities	14,971.45
Office Equipment & Furniture	1,370.67
Sub-Total:	<u>\$ 45,389.46</u>

TOTAL EXPENSE <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY24)</i>	\$ 107,752.58
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<b>NET INCOME/LOSS</b>	<b><u>\$ 10,371.31</u></b>
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FUND CASH BALANCE JULY 1, 2023	\$ 114,922.38
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FUND CASH BALANCE JUNE 30, 2024	\$ 158,036.86
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## 0067 CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

### INCOME

Camping Fees	\$ 302,700.68
Concessions	6,313.35
Land Rentals	3,249.91
Equipment Rentals	900.00
Donations	1,635.61
Interest	2,379.90
Grants	82,500.00
Miscellaneous	468.29
TOTAL INCOME <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY24)</i>	<u>\$ 400,147.74</u>

### EXPENSES

#### Administration

Auditors Transfers	\$ 136,200.00
Concession Inventory	1,745.39
Promotional Activities	3,648.50
Taxes & Fees	3,499.75
Land Acquisitions	78,869.13
Buildings	35,796.62
TOTAL EXPENSES <i>(Accrued to include Period 13 FY24)</i>	<u>\$ 259,759.39</u>

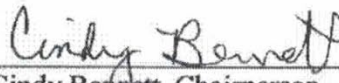
#### NET INCOME/LOSS

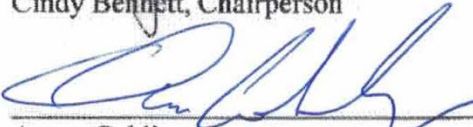
\$ 140,388.35

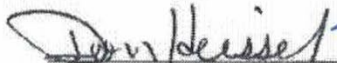
FUND CASH BALANCE JULY 1, 2023 \$ 270,781.35

FUND CASH BALANCE JUNE 30, 2024 \$ 315,830.03

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Cindy Bennett, Chairperson

  
Aaron Gehling, Secretary

  
Daniel Heissel, Director