

Story County Conservation Board
Monday, January 11, 2010
Story County Conservation Center, McFarland Park

1. Chair D. Toms called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS	STAFF	GUESTS
Don Toms – present	Steve Lekwa	Ben Dodd
Wayne Clinton – present	Jolene Van Waus	
Erin Wilgenbusch – present – arrived 7:05		
Joyce Hornstein – present		
Ted Tedesco – present		
3. ADMINISTER OATH OF OFFICE TO NEW BOARD MEMBER
Chair Toms administered the oath of office to re-appointed board member Joyce Hornstein.
4. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS
Ben Dodd, Iowa DNR fisheries biologist, was present to give a report later in the meeting.
5. REVIEW OF AGENDA AND HANDOUTS
The board briefly reviewed materials provided.
6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
MOTION by T. Tedesco, SECOND by J. Hornstein, to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2009 meeting. MCU.
7. APPROVAL OF CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS
MOTION by T. Tedesco, SECOND by W. Clinton, to approve all claims and receipts as submitted. MCU.
8. FINANCIAL REPORTS AND UPDATES
Director Lekwa reported on the department head meeting with the board of supervisors. Conservation was in the minority of departments that met the targeted amounts for their FY11 budget requests. Budget requests currently exceed anticipated revenue by about \$1.35 million. Work sessions with the supervisors begin this week; Conservation and IRVM’s session is scheduled for January 13 at 9:00 a.m.

Lekwa announced that the new IRVM building is coming along nicely. The project is over budget because of the interior work being accomplished by the Facilities Management department.
9. SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS
Tedesco stated he will not be able to attend the February 8 meeting. Lekwa reminded board members of the IACCB spring conference on March 20 at Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge.
10. COMMUNICATIONS
There were written communications. Lekwa stated that SCC is hopeful that the IDOT will

officially approve a transportation enhancement for \$545,000 to finish the current phases of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. Thirty percent matching funds will be SCC's responsibility.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

12. ELECTION OF 2010 STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD OFFICERS
MOTION by D. Toms, SECOND by E. Wilgenbusch, nominating Wayne Clinton as Chair. Ayes: Tedesco, Hornstein, Wilgenbusch, Toms: Nays: Clinton. Motion carried.

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by W. Clinton, nominating as Erin Wilgenbusch as vice-chair. MCU.

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by E. Wilgenbusch, nominating Ted Tedesco as secretary. MCU.

Chair Clinton conducted the remainder of the meeting.

13. IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FISHERIES UPDATE

Ben Dodd, fisheries biologist, gave an update on Story County fisheries. Dodd reported that budget constraints have eliminated a majority of the DNR's temporary positions. Focus has been shifted to urban fisheries, including Des Moines and the metro area, with outreach and education being identified as priorities. Dodd shared the following information with the board via a PowerPoint presentation.

Stocking - Channel catfish were stocked at Dakins Lake, Hickory Grove Park, West Peterson Park, and hybrid striped bass were stocked at Ada Hayden Heritage Park. Dodd added that the city of Ames and the IDNR now have a management agreement, and the IDNR sampled Ada Hayden Lake this year.

Hickory Grove was part of a 2008 research project studying catfish. Sampling showed 1,700 catfish/20 acres; most were under 18 inches. These results may be due to: 1) use of baited hoop nets--which may not catch bigger fish; 2) higher harvest rates for fish this size; or 3) too many fish--which has stunted their growth. Dodd added that spikes from some of the catfish were removed for aging. If it is determined that there are too many fish, stocking may be cut back.

Sampling - The DNR has not been able to sample other lakes, but sampling of Hickory Grove Lake indicated that this fishery seems to be doing well. Sampling of largemouth bass showed a good number of bass reaching 18 inches as well as young fish. Dodd said it is hard to get a good representative sampling during the day, so the DNR plans to do more night sampling to bring bigger fish in.

As far as pan fish, Dodd reported that there is almost no vegetation left in Hickory Grove Lake, and bluegills are not getting very big. Bluegills seem to be doing well considering the number of carp in the lake. The top end of the crappie size structure is good, but not many young fish were seen. Dodd remarked that fluctuating spring weather has not helped the spawn, and strong bass year classes will feed on a lot of young crappie.

Urban lake sampling and harvest have shown low bass numbers. The DNR may have to change the minimum length (18 inches) for those areas to keep good bass numbers and decent-sized pan fish. This is something that the DNR will continue to monitor.

Projects – Smallmouth bass numbers in the Skunk River were excellent in 2008 and 2009. This could be due to dam modifications at Story City and 13th Street in Ames and over-wintering at East Peterson Park. Dodd said that smallmouth bass will make huge migrations in the fall and spring. A fish habitat grant would be a good source of funding for a project involving radio telemetry to tag smallmouth bass in the river and observe them with underwater cameras.

Work on the Hickory Grove watershed/lake renovation continues. A working group of SCC, NRCS, ISU, and IDNR staff has established goals of improving water quality and reducing debris loads during storm events. The fishery looks good, but carp numbers and lack of vegetation need to be investigated. Special carp traps may be used to sample and/or remove carp.

An Ames High School science class under the leadership of teacher Mike Todd is working with the City of Ames to improve water quality, educate the public, and provide better fishing at Moore Park Pond.

The board thanked Dodd for his informative report.

14. HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

Dependent on approval of the transportation enhancement grant, Lekwa stated that favorable weather conditions are needed for the contractor to move back on site. Forms can be set in place this winter in preparation of pouring concrete this spring.

J. Hornstein reported on the Spina Bifida Ride on the HOINT on January 10. The Iowa State Snowmobile Association (ISSA) held this event, providing snowmobiles with special sleds to take children for rides on the trail. About 20 snowmobiles were available to give rides to 30 children. Hornstein received many favorable comments on how wonderful the HOINT is for snowmobiling. The association has new equipment they use to groom the trail, and they put up signs in the fall for safe snowmobiling. The group is meeting on January 30 to ride the trail between Huxley and Cambridge and invited legislators to this event.

15. CORPS OF ENGINEERS LAND TRANSFER

Lekwa reported that the state archeologist's office is now involved in determining if significant sites need to be explored. Iowa State University's estimated cost for the exploration was too high. Lekwa suggested that all the sites be considered significant and place conservation easements on these sites at a drastically lower cost. Congressman Latham's office will continue to work in Washington to acquire federal funding.

W. Clinton said he will be in Washington, DC in March and offered to speak with Congressman Latham. Lekwa will prepare information for Clinton to take for this visit.

16. OTHER

T. Tedesco commented that the director's annual evaluation has been completed and asked what the requirement of this board is to appoint a search committee to start the succession process prior to the director's planned retirement. E. Wilgenbusch announced that the Iowa Small Business Development Center is offering several succession planning workshops this spring. Cost is \$75 for up to four people. She stated a holistic approach is needed to keep the conservation program moving forward. Board members agreed that the search and the succession planning process are this board's responsibility.

T. Tedesco asked if the county anticipates more difficulty with state reimbursements in the future. Clinton confirmed this, saying that more costs will be shifted down to the counties and that he expects more budget cuts. Clinton added that Story County's tax delinquencies are usually not very high.

J. Hornstein reported on the REAP Congress she attended on January 9. Two new REAP license plates (a trout and a deer) were unveiled. Iowa Water and Land Legacy (IWILL) informational meetings will be held on January 17 and 18, 2010.

W. Clinton has been looking into funding options for land acquisition. Linn County utilizes a section of the Code of Iowa which states that county conservation boards can request a portion of camping fees to be used for land acquisition. A portion of boat rental fees may also be an option. A fund is in place to allow this, and Clinton suggested that the conservation board officially request the board of supervisors to return a portion of camping fees to Conservation for future land acquisition needs. Lekwa said the county conservation reserve account was most recently used for waterline repairs at Hickory Grove.

MOTION by T. Tedesco, SECOND by J. Hornstein, to add this item to the February board meeting agenda. MCU.

Lekwa reported that SCC is still waiting for a resolution on the endowment situation. Since Story County Conservation signed the agreement and benefits are derived from the endowment, it is County Attorney Steve Holmes' opinion that these funds are county money. Lekwa added that this has a bearing on how SCC would structure or define a non-profit. Holmes agreed that if his interpretation was correct, there would be ramifications for dozens of community and county foundations across the state.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by T. Tedesco, SECOND by E. Wilgenbusch, to adjourn the meeting. MCU.
Chair Clinton adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Recording Secretary

Story County Conservation Board