

FY15 Annual Report

July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015



June 27, 2015 – Aerial view of the Dakins Lake Expansion Project

The mission of Story County Conservation is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of Story County by wisely managing our natural resources, by providing recreational and leisure opportunities, and by educating citizens to be wise caretakers of our natural environment.



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Executive Summary

By Michael Cox, Director

On September 19, 1950, an estimated 52,000 people attended a national soil conservation field day on the land we now know as Dakins Lake. It was a defining moment in the history of Zearing and Story County.

“Large crowds stood around all field projects, thrilled at the tractors, tillage machines, and heavy earth-moving equipment as workmen built the dam, terraces, waterways, laid drain tile and bladed in, filled and seeded unsightly gullies.”

Iowa Farm Register - September 20, 1950

Dakins Lake has served the community well since 1960 when the newly established Story County Conservation Board (SCCB) acquired Dakins as its first park. The 40-acre park, with a small campground and lake, was a focal point for the community but needed some attention. The lake, originally 5.5 acres and 15 feet deep, was only 8 feet deep in 2012. Soil from the lake’s 800-acre watershed had eroded into the lake. Still, the campground was full almost every weekend.

June 27, 2015 was another important day for Zearing and Story County as it marked the official opening of an expanded and renewed Dakins Lake. Guiding tenets for the new park were improved water quality, a thriving fishery, additional recreational opportunities, and opportunities for economic growth. Hopefully, the new park will be enjoyed by many for



June 2015 - Black crappie are released in the new lake

generations to come and the park will model how conservation can stimulate both community vitality and personal well-being.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of numerous individuals and organizations. A dedicated Story County Conservation board and the Dakins family never gave up on a vision for a better park, the Story County Board of Supervisors had the forethought and commitment to invest in the community, conservation staff worked with funders and partner agencies to design and construct the park, and community members wrapped their arms around the park and embraced its development.

2015 was an historic year for Zearing and Story County!

Story County Conservation Board

2014 – Joyce Hornstein (chair); Ted Tedesco (vice-chair); Craig Meyers (secretary); Allen Weber; Dr. Jim Pease; Wayne Clinton (ex-officio)

2015 – Ted Tedesco (chair); Craig Meyers (vice-chair); Allen Weber (secretary); Dr. Jim Pease; Dr. Nancy Franz, Wayne Clinton (ex-officio)

Story County Board of Supervisors

2014 – Paul Toot (chair); Wayne Clinton, Rick Sanders

2015 – Rick Sanders (chair); Paul Toot, Wayne Clinton

Staff



Summer 2015 - Story County Conservation Staff

Back row: Ryan Wiemold, Heather Hucka, Amy Yoakum, Megan Dohrman, Patrick Ives, Beau Hoppe, Ben Marcus, Luke Feilmeier, Russ DeWall, Danny Simcox. **Middle row:** Danielle Blaylock, Jolene Van Waus, Carol Williams, Joe Kooiker, Rebekah Beall, Melissa Johannes, Michael Cox. **Front row:** Tyler Kelley, Jerry Keys, Erica Eaves, Joe Hill. **Not pictured:** Jessica Lancial.

Staff

Administration

Director – Michael Cox
Financial Data Manager – Jolene Van Waus
Administrative Assistant –Melissa Johannes

Environmental Education

Environmental Education Coordinator – Jerry Keys
Naturalists –Heather Hucka, Emily Herring, Jessica Lancial, Rebekah Beall Warbuton
Outreach Coordinator – Sydney Algreen (through August 8, 2014), Erica Eaves
Summer Naturalists, 2014 – Kelly Mitchell, Jacob Wiese
Summer Naturalists, 2015 –Summer Thorsten, Kasey Troxel

Special Projects

Special Projects Ranger – Carol Williams

Natural Resources

Natural Resource Specialist – Amy Yoakum
Natural Resource Aide, 2014 – Tyler Renze
Natural Resource Aides, 2015 – Will Hilsabeck, Ryan Mullins, Calla Olson

Skunk River Unit

Park Ranger – Ryan Wiemold
Conservation Technician II – Danny Simcox
Conservation Technicians – Joe Hill, Jarett Cook (through April 15, 2015), Benjamin Marcus
Park Aides, 2014 – Matthew Monahan, Mark Runkel
Park Aides, 2015 – Danielle Blaylock, Cody Moore, Matthew Shanklin
Park Ranger Aide, 2014 – Joseph Allen
Park Ranger Aide, 2015 – Steven Donahue

Indian Creek Unit

Park Ranger – Luke Feilmeier
Conservation Technicians – Russ DeWall, Beau Hoppe
Park Aides, 2014 – John Kirchner, Benjamin Marcus, Joel Schwarzkopf, Sammi Trail
Park Aides, 2015 – Casy Angell, Zach Jamison, Blake Jesse, Joel Schwarzkopf
Waterfront Aides, 2014 – Saryn Case, Dustin Curran, Zachary Jamison, Charles Robertson
Waterfront Aides, 2015 – Saryn Case, Baylee Milam, Benjamin Toot, Josie Wierson

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management

Roadside Biologist – Joe Kooiker
Vegetation Management Specialist – Tyler Kelley
Vegetation Management Aides, 2014 – Tyler Bruck, James Evans, Heather Stratton
Vegetation Management Aides, 2015 – Megan Dohrman, Patrick Ives

Environmental Education

Programs and Events Overview

Story County Conservation conducted or sponsored 1,131 programs resulting in 30,077 contacts. These included 742 indoor presentations, 397 outdoor experiences, and 10 service learning opportunities.

Recent years have seen an increased demand for public and school programming. Schools were being turned away, and public programs were very popular. As a result of this increasing need



January 2015 – Jerry Keys teaching ice fishing

for environmental education, an additional naturalist was added to the staff. Rebekah Beall Warburton joined the environmental education unit on August 4, 2014.

During FY15, funding from the Outdoor Alliance of Story County provided bussing fees to schools that conducted service learning (removing invasive plants and hand harvesting prairie seed on SCC properties. Four schools applied for bus scholarships, and two submitted invoices for reimbursement. Prairie Rivers of Iowa and SCC co-sponsored a Local Foods Cycle bike ride highlighting local foods in Story County. The day-long event was attended by 122 riders.

Staff partnered with the Ames Area Amateur Astronomers and Central Iowa Prairie Network to offer 15 public programs or events, resulting in an

additional 214 contacts. Schools, youth groups, hunter education classes, church groups, and other county conservation agencies borrowed environmental education supplies for their programs.

Outreach

Story County Conservation's outreach program continued to grow and change in FY15. Erica Eaves started as the new outreach coordinator on September 14, 2014. The quarterly *Prairie Horizons* newsletter, which provides articles as well as a schedule of SCC programs, events, and meetings, was distributed in both printed and electronic versions. The number of subscriptions totaled 1,782 mailed and 586 electronic. An additional 555 copies were distributed to area libraries, city halls, and businesses. Special event fliers were created and distributed to schools and local businesses to publicize programs.

More than 90 press releases were sent electronically to media outlets. Programs and events were also shared on Facebook and the county's website. Postings to SCC's Facebook page included press releases, conservation-related news from other websites, and photographs of SCC projects and volunteer experiences. By the end of FY15, SCC had 1,592 "fans," a 29% increase over FY14. Twitter and Instagram were other social media platforms used to promote outreach.

Volunteers

Volunteers are very important to the mission of SCC. Volunteer hours logged in FY15 included the following: serving on boards and committees (Story County Conservation Board, Story County Trails Advisory Committee, and Story County Conservation *Partners*), providing office/clerical help, cleaning SCC parks through the Adopt-A-Park program, providing natural resource and land stewardship work, collecting prairie seed, and helping with environmental education programs.



September 2014 - United Way Day of Caring volunteers building picnic tables

SCC also provided volunteer opportunities at scheduled events, including TEAM (Trail Enhancement and Management) workdays, seed harvests, Ames Area Amateur Astronomers programs, prairie walks, and *Partners* spring and fall festivals.

Volunteer opportunities were advertised on SCC’s website and Facebook page, Prairie Horizons newsletter, and the upgraded Volunteer Center of Story County website. Various student and adult organizations were matched to SCC volunteer tasks to complete service projects.

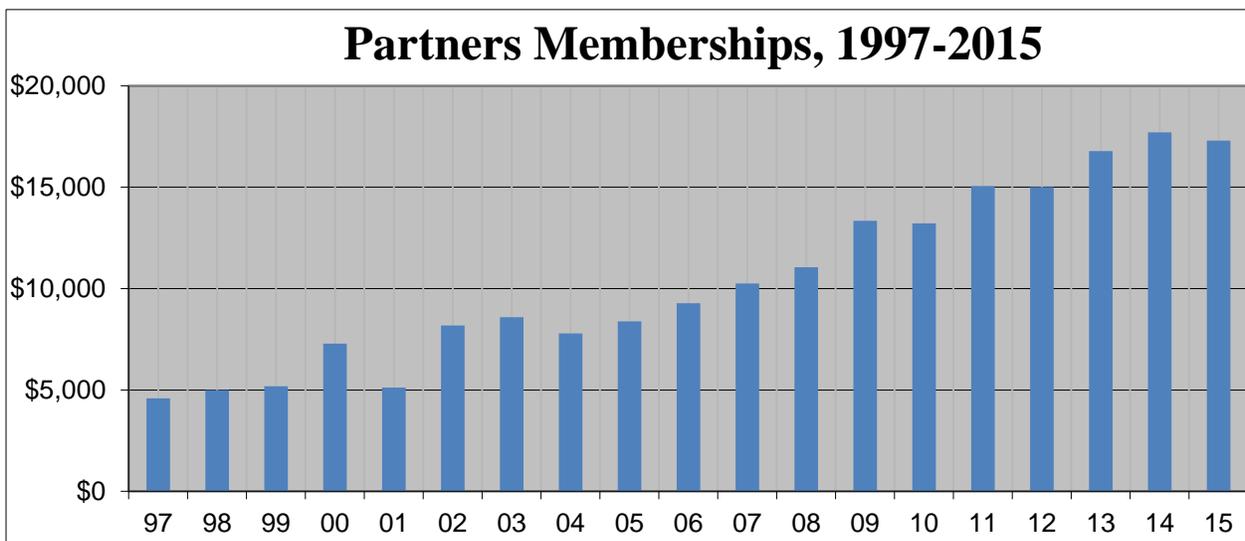
While some volunteers chose to donate time by themselves (296 individuals in FY15), 32 businesses, schools, or clubs volunteered as well. Over 4,000 hours were donated by volunteers in FY15—equivalent to almost two full-time staff! The Independent Sector in 2015 valued volunteer service at \$23.07 per hour. SCC volunteers provided \$92,280 of service in FY15.

VOLUNTEER HOURS FY15 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015)		
Volunteer Category	Occurrences	Volunteer Hours
Administration	166	508.75
Environmental education	206	732.25
Special projects	254	721.25
Roadside program	28	53.25
Field	633	1,991.00
TOTALS	1,287	4,006.50

Story County Conservation Partners

Story County Conservation Partners provides funding and volunteer support for SCC. Partners hosts spring and fall festivals at McFarland Park, sponsors a photo contest, and provides financial support for the *Prairie Horizons* newsletter and various conservation projects.

Membership levels in the organization range from Great Horned Owl at \$30/year to Red-tailed Hawk at \$1,000/year. Partners averaged 169 memberships during FY15, raising a total of \$17,296 in fees to support SCC.



The 2014 Partners Fall Festival was held on October 5 and featured music by The Host Country. The theme for the festival was “Timber” and featured activities about trees. The Iowa State University Forestry Club gave demonstrations on timbersports skills, including the single bucksaw, underhand chop, standing block, and stock saw. The weather was pleasant, and around 300 people attended.

The Partners Spring Festival was held on May 3, and the theme “To Bee or Not to Bee” focused on pollinators. The weather was perfect, and an estimated 250 people attended. The Runkels entertained the crowd with a mix of old and new music.

Partners provided funding for these Story County Conservation projects during FY15: refreshments for environmental education programs (\$141.88), classes for the Ames All Species event (\$440), a new telescope mount for the Ames Area Amateur Astronomers (\$1,500), mugs for Wild Women of the Woods participants (\$800), and supplies for the FLOAT V nature camp (\$158.48).

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management

FY15 goals for the Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) program included timely completion of the Secondary Road Department's work orders and giving extra effort to promote successful plantings and reduce soil loss; continued development and promotion of the drainage district maintenance program, assistance with the Dakins Lake expansion project; and increased efficiency in the field.

Seeding and mulching totals in the right-of-way were consistent with the 25-year average of 41 acres. A total of 23 acres was planted or hydromulched on SCC areas, including Jennett Heritage Area, Cooper's Prairie Marsh, Cambridge mitigation site, and several spots on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. Dakins Lake received 22 loads (16,500 pounds) of mulch in December. Four sites on private land (one a contract planting) were seeded to native prairie species. Increased cost share for agricultural set aside programs generated interest in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in Story County, and equipment rentals increased 60%. Staff distributed 2,200 pounds of native grass and forb seed by networking with landowners and the local Pheasants Forever chapter. Communication increased with landowners and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to promote CRP enrollment along Story County's open ditches.

Seed harvest was less than ideal due to equipment failure, and the harvest extended into late October. Seed amounts were average at 220 pounds of useable seed, but the diversity of species was low.



October 2014 – Story County Conservation staff combining prairie at a private seed nursery

Brush causing reduced visibility at intersections and bridges was cleared. Due to equipment issues and lack of contractor interest, weed and brush spraying in the right-of-way was decreased 50%.

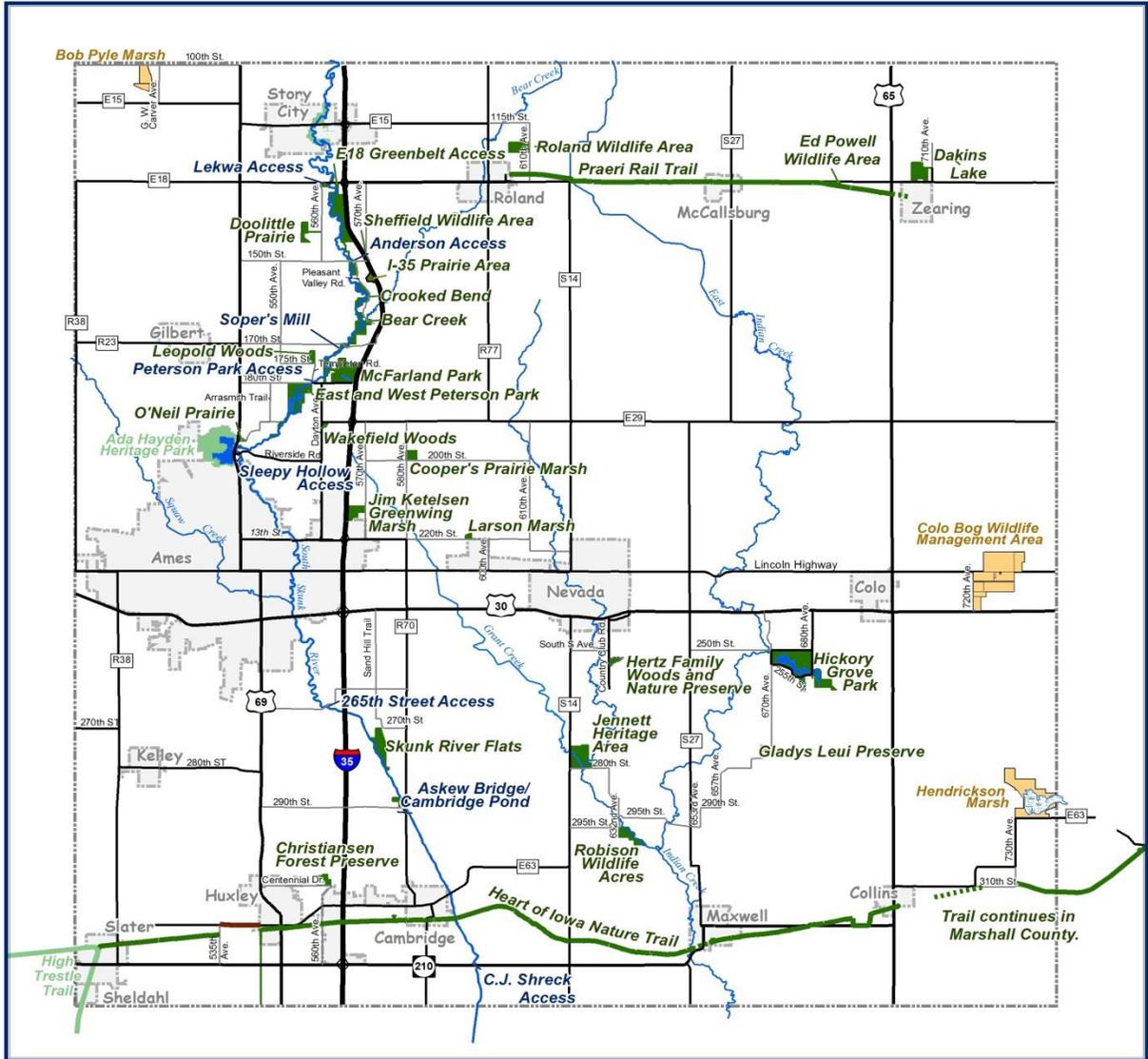
Above-average moisture throughout the growing season was ideal for weed growth, so weed commissioner duties increased. Noxious weed complaints on private land were handled with phone calls and registered letters. Weed situations within city limits are increasing and can be difficult to resolve. IRVM staff performed contract spraying for these occasions as well as assisting several communities with invasive species control in their native plantings.

Equipment and machinery improvements included installing a 1,000 RPM PTO, brush grapple, and ballast box to the John Deere 5115M tractor. With the assistance of a Living Roadway Trust Fund grant, the 1998 hydroseeder was traded for a 2014 Bowie hydroseeder. The new hydroseeder was mounted to the frame of the 1996 International tandem dump truck after it was professionally inspected and repaired.

Vegetation management operations in the open ditches improved as the program matured. Equipment upgrades and staff logging experience were important factors contributing to \$21,354 in drainage district revenue. Staff sprayed volunteer trees in Milford/32 and planted a small site in Sherman/26. A considerable amount of time was spent stacking and burning brush piles in Grant/13 and Boone/Story 1. The county road department provided a big loader to assist with this work. Trees were logged and stacked during the winter months in Warren/11. A contractor completed tree removal along Hamilton/Story 1 in April.

IRVM FIELD OPERATIONS FY15 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015)	
Acres of roadsides burned – 10 sites	16.75
Acres of roadsides seeded (native) – 56 sites	36.25
Acres of roadsides seeded (non-native) – 5 sites	5.75
Miles of roadsides sprayed (brush)	71.5
Miles of roadsides sprayed (weeds)	194.5
Miles of drainage districts sprayed	2
Equipment rentals	16
Weed complaints	16
Acres of contract plantings – 1 site	3
Acres of conservation area planted – 6 sites	23.75
Acres of private plantings – 4 sites	10.75

Story County Conservation Map



Legend

- County Managed
- State Managed
- City Owned
- Developed Trail
- Undeveloped Trail
- On Road

Parks in blue are Skunk River Water Trail Access Points

Parks, Natural Areas, and Trails

265th Street Access • 56091 265th Street, Ames • 1 acre

This small water trail access on the Skunk River south of Ames offers stream fishing.

Anderson Access • 56743 150th Street, Story City • 2 acres

This Skunk River water trail access offers stream fishing and woodland habitat.

Askew Bridge/Cambridge Pond – 57887 290th Street, Cambridge • 26.5 acres

This site provides a water trail access for stream fishing on the Skunk River and a four-acre pond surrounded by reconstructed prairie and vegetation.

Bear Creek • 16415 Pleasant Valley Road, Story City • 116 acres

This area provides access to the Skunk River Greenbelt trail. Hunting is allowed on 113 acres; 3 acres are wildlife refuge.

Major Project During the Year

Overhead vegetation on the trail to Soper's Mill was cleared during the June TEAM day.

C. J. Shreck Access • 59627 Highway 210, Cambridge • 3 acres

This water trail access is on the Skunk River off Hwy. 210 south of Ames.

Christiansen Forest Preserve • 55973 310th Street, Huxley • 49 acres

This wooded tract near Huxley was donated to the conservation board in 1985 by Charles Christiansen. The area is designated as a wildlife refuge and includes prairie and trails.

Major Project During the Year

October TEAM day volunteers re-routed part of the north trail to make a more sustainable bench cut trail.

Staff worked with ISU natural resource students on developing a management plan.

Colo Bog Wildlife Management Area • 22687 730th Avenue, Colo • 168 acres

The Colo Bog Wetland complex contains over 630 acres of native or restored prairie. This public hunting area is currently managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, but SCC owns 168 acres, including the project's original 25-acre bog site.

Cooper's Prairie Marsh • 58249 200th Street, Nevada • 40 acres

The original 10 acres of Cooper's Prairie Marsh were acquired from Robert Cooper in 1976. The area supports a large population of upland and wetland wildlife and is a designated public hunting area. The agricultural land was restored to prairie.

Crooked Bend • 15997 Pleasant Valley Road, Story City • 66 acres

This wooded tract is in the Skunk River Greenbelt. It is open to hunting and stream fishing.

Dakins Lake • 12635 710th Avenue, Zearing • 103 acres

Located on the north side of Zearing, Dakins Lake includes remnant and restored prairie, successional timber, trails, and 20 acres of open water in two lakes. The park offers hiking, camping, fishing, picnicking, and a natural playscape.

Major Project During the Year

Work on the Dakins Lake expansion project continued throughout the year. Delays occurred due to weather and problems with construction. The October 1, 2014 substantial completion date was extended to June 2, 2015. Construction on the buildings continued through the winter under plastic tents to allow application of block sealer, paint, and stain.

Staff used various methods to seed 23.3 acres of turf and native grass. Fabric and mulch, equipment, large climbing rocks, and tree cookies were added at the natural playscape.

A Conservation Corps Iowa (CCI) crew spent two days removing invasive species from the prairie remnant. Staff removed invasive tree species to create a view of the original lake from the campground. Pallet structures were assembled and placed with cedar trees for fish habitat.

In the spring, turf grass was planted (and re-planted) around the park, erosion mat was installed, the rain garden was planted, primitive campsite pads were leveled, roads were graded, and rock was added where needed. With the help of Colo-Nesco students, 160 trees were planted in the campground, around the shelter house, and near the lake. An Iowa State University (ISU) forestry class planted 75 bare root shrubs and several trees along the park entrance.



May 2015 – Children enjoying the playground at Dakins Lake



April 2015 - COLO-NESCO students planting trees at Dakins Lake

The campground showerhouse and the picnic shelter were completed in late spring. Building amenities, park signs, interpretive panels, campground pedestals and posts, fire rings, benches, and the wood shed were installed in the days leading up to the park's re-opening on May 22. A grand opening celebration was held on June 27 with official fanfare followed by a community picnic hosted by SCC.



May 2015 – Staff preparing the park for opening day



June 2015 - The new picnic shelter

Doolittle Prairie • 14249 560th Ave, Story City • 43 acres

The prairie is divided into two tracts. The northern Plover Tract is owned by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and has been managed by SCC since 1980. The 24-acre Plover Tract has six natural potholes and native prairie areas. The Matheason Tract is owned by SCC and was purchased with help from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. This 16-acre tract has native prairie areas and three potholes, providing valuable habitat for wetland wildlife. Doolittle Prairie is open to hunting.



October 2014 – Seed harvest at Doolittle Prairie

E-18 Greenbelt Access • 56342 130th Street, Story City • 210 acres

Twenty-nine acres of prairie, seven acres of wetland, and hiking, equestrian, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking trails are available. Hunting of forest and upland species is allowed.

Major Project during the Year

Staff mowed the prairie to control brush.

Ed Powell Wildlife Area • 68328 130th Street, Zearing • 17 acres

The Ed Powell Wildlife Area offers public hunting adjoining the Praeri Rail Trail. The entire area of reconstructed prairie is bisected by a small stream.

Major Project during the Year

A cable gate was added to the parking lot.

Gladys Leui Preserve • 27371 670th Avenue, Maxwell • 25 acres

The Gladys Leui Preserve, a wildlife refuge, is mostly mature hardwood forest bisected by a small stream. Upland oak-hickory, maple-basswood, and floodplain forest species are present. The area also offers a six-acre reconstructed prairie. A small parking area is provided, but no trails are maintained.

Major Project During the Year

Prescribed burning was completed in the spring. Exterior fence was removed, rock was added, and ruts, potholes, and washouts were graded.

Heart of Iowa Nature Trail · Slater to Collins · 394 acres

The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT) is a cooperative effort of the Story and Marshall County Conservation Boards and an important part of the Central Iowa Trails System. A segment of the former Milwaukee Railroad from Slater to Melbourne forms this 32-mile recreational trail corridor. This multi-purpose trail accommodates bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, and snowmobilers.

The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail meets the High Trestle Trail in Slater. Future plans include connecting the east end of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail to Melbourne, the Iowa 330 Trail, Marshall County Conservation's Grimes Farm Nature Farm, the Marshalltown Greenbelt Trail, the city of Marshalltown, and to the Chichaqua Valley Trail.

Major Project During the Year

Sections of the trail damaged by flooding in 2013 were repaired, including surface material replacement, culvert clearing and replacement, shoulder reconstruction and armoring, fence reconstruction, and ditch clearing. Repairs were completed with FEMA funding. Brush was sprayed, additional rock was placed on the trail in the fall and spring, shoulders/areas disturbed by repair work were seeded, and debris was removed from a gully at the cattle crossing. A section of fence was repaired, and fence east of Cambridge (Griffith mile) was re-built after it was removed to complete wash-out repairs on the trail.

Hertz Family Woods and Nature Preserve · 25401 Country Club Road, Nevada · 21.5 acres

This park was donated by the Hertz family in memory of Carl and Marjory Hertz and their son, C. Douglas Hertz. This diverse woodland includes 22 tree species and many wildflowers. It was preserved by the family to provide a site for public enjoyment. The park includes a one-mile trail. The land was donated to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, who in turn donated the park to SCC.

Hickory Grove Park · 67382 250th Street, Colo · 445 acres

Hickory Grove Park is the largest of SCC's parks. This multiple-use recreational area southwest of Colo includes a 98-acre lake stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, channel catfish, and grass carp, camping, boating, picnicking, and hunting.

Major Projects During the Year

CCI spent two days removing invasive species in the park, and a volunteer group spent one day removing honeysuckle around Oriole Ridge Lodge. Brush was removed on the north side of the park, and trails were widened in both the east and south game areas.

New steps leading down to the beach were installed with the help of volunteers. Cable gates were installed at restricted entry lanes, and the flag pole at the entrance of the park received new lighting.



July 2014 – Youth from Kirkwood, Missouri United Methodist Church re-build steps at Hickory Grove

Staff burned approximately 4.5 acres previously cleared of invasive species to control re-sprouting vegetation. A prescribed burn was conducted at the center circle on the north side of the park in the spring.

The Watershed Improvement Phase #1 project was designed, and construction permits were received. One residential septic system was replaced with cost share funding from grants. More than 40 geese were harvested during a special hunting season to help control the goose population at the park. Staff began planning for next steps in the watershed improvement project.

I-35 Prairie View Area • 15233 Interstate Hwy 35, Story City • 23 acres

This area is owned by the Iowa Department of Transportation. SCC manages the site's natural resources, including woodland, prairie, and a .25-mile hiking trail.

Jennett Heritage Area • 62321 280th Street, Nevada • 171 acres

This area was purchased in March 2011. The family of Raymond and Edythe Jennett, Hertz Farm Management, and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation were instrumental in its acquisition.

Story County's largest wildlife area contains native prairie remnant, two ponds, two creeks, wetlands, and woodlands. A botanical survey revealed 277 prairie species such as silver-leafed scurf pea, smooth blue aster, and marble seed. The remnant prairie rests on steep slopes, allowing for a greater variety of prairie plants to thrive. The area's combination of landscapes supports a wide range of bird species, including wild turkey and the increasingly-rare bobwhite quail.

Major Project During the Year

Staff mowed 25 acres of native prairie seedings and spot sprayed areas containing invasive species. Over 1.5 miles of barbed wire fence and posts were removed. Dead and hazard trees were removed from the remnant prairie and along the road. A 15-acre prairie restoration was seeded in the southwest corner of the area. A CCI crew removed trees in the oxbow, and prescribed burning was completed in the spring.

Staff began planning for restoration of the oxbow and a wetland. Projects will be completed with grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Jim Ketelsen Greenwing Marsh • 21163 570th Avenue, Ames • 68 acres

Ketelsen Marsh was acquired by the conservation board in 1987. It contains a native prairie pothole, a restored wetland, restored and native prairie, pasture grasses, and a shelterbelt. The six-acre sedge meadow located in the southwest corner is an easement with a private landowner. The marsh honors the late Jim Ketelsen, an avid outdoorsperson and supporter of the Ducks Unlimited Greenwing program. The acquisition was made possible through the partnership of the Ames Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, Anderson Lake Sportsmen, Inc., Big Bluestem Audubon Society, friends and family of Jim Ketelsen, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Habitat Stamp Grant program, Dr. Gerald Johnson, Story County Pheasants Forever, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and Wetlands for Iowa Program.

Major Project During the Year

Brush was removed using chainsaws and the forestry mower.

Larson Marsh • 59537 220th Street, Nevada • 12 acres

Larson Marsh was acquired from Maurice and Ruth Larson in 1981. Assistance from the state's wildlife habitat stamp fund grant program allowed the conservation board to make wildlife habitat improvements on the area. A large, glacial pothole was deepened, and two islands were created within the pothole. Native prairie grasses and forbs were planted on the islands and other areas around the pothole. The marsh is open to hunting.

Major Project During the Year

In March, staff burned 11.5 acres.

Lekwa Access • 56156 130th Street, Story City • 10 acres

This water trail access on the Skunk River south of Story City has a small wetland area and nine acres of woodland. The Lekwa family granted a lease for public river access in 1995.

Leopold Woods • 55821 175th Street, Ames • 20 acres

Leopold Woods is a wildlife refuge acquired from Don Norton in February 2010. The tract includes small areas of cool season and prairie grassland and planted 20-year-old trees. A small parking area is provided, but no other improvements are allowed on the area due to deed restrictions.

McFarland Park • 56461 180th Street, Ames • 240 acres

McFarland Park is located northeast of Ames and offers a variety of ecotypes including tallgrass prairie, woodland, and stream habitats. The administrative and environmental education staff are housed at this building, and the multipurpose room is available for rent. A six-acre lake is available for fishing and canoeing, and the park contains seven acres of trails, including hiking, mountain biking, and the paved Touch-A-Life Trail around the lake.

Major Project During the Year

Trees along the north fence line were hinge cut, and blazing star seed was spread in the back prairie between the interstate and the forest. Trees were marked and cleared for a savannah restoration project. Staff burned 65 acres of prairie. A set of trail stairs was re-built at the May TEAM workday.

O'Neil Prairie • .1 mile east of Hwy. 69 on Arrasmith Trail • 5 acres

This area contains 4.7 acres of prairie and .3 acres of wetland. It was acquired through flood buy-outs in 1998.

Peterson Park • 203 acres

East: 55756 180th Street, Ames; West: 55310 180th Street, Ames

Peterson Park, with a 31-acre lake, is situated along the Skunk River Greenbelt. Park entrances are located on the east and west sides of the Skunk River. Activities and scenic areas include: swimming beach (West Peterson), fishing, picnicking, bird watching, boating, hiking and equine trails, canoe access, and hunting.

Major Project During the Year

West Peterson Park was closed for two days in early July due to flooding. Tree and debris cleanup occurred throughout the month of July. Staff armored shoreline in two areas on the east side of the lake with concrete chunks. Staff burned 5.8 acres of prairie in March 2015.

Staff and volunteers installed docks constructed by the ISU Design class at West Peterson Park in July, and steps were installed on the straight dock by the picnic pavilion on the east side of the lake.

Peterson Park Access • 17952 Templeton Road, Ames • 203 acres

Built in 2013, this area is a Skunk River Water Trail access and offers canoeing and stream fishing.



July 2014 – Staff and volunteers installing the new dock at West Peterson Park

Praeri Rail Trail • Roland to Zearing • 135 acres

This 10.5-mile section of abandoned railway was acquired by the county in 1978, and development began in the spring of 1979. The spelling of the word "Praeri" recognizes the area's strong Norwegian heritage. Many native prairie remnants are adjacent to the trail. This multi-purpose trail accommodates bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, and snowmobilers. Sections of the trail at Roland and McCallsburg have a limestone surface; the remainder of the trail is mowed grass.

Major Project During the Year

Trail surfacing lost in the 2013 flood was replaced. Accumulated cornstalks deposited on the trail during flooding were burned prior to trail repairs.

Robison Wildlife Acres • 29490 632nd Avenue, Nevada • 78 acres

Robison Wildlife Acres is a unique area in south-central Story County. The initial 58 acres were donated to the conservation board by former board member Clay Robison. The remaining 20 acres were purchased from the Whitaker estate. West Indian Creek forms most of the eastern boundary of the park, and nature trails wind through grassland and woodland. The area is a favorite spot for spring wildflower walks. The park is a wildlife refuge.

Major Project During the Year

The CCI removed large trees in the southeast prairie area where the goats grazed several years ago to control invasive vegetation.

Roland Wildlife Area • 12007 610th Avenue, Roland • 80 acres

This parcel was purchased in December 2012 with financial support from Story County Pheasants Forever and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The 80-acre area offers prairie and wetland habitats and upland and wetland hunting.

Major Project During the Year

Wetland and prairie restoration was completed. In an agreement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the area was seeded. A parking lot was built in the spring.

Sheffield Wildlife Area • .25 N of 150th St. on 570th Ave., Story City • 3 acres

This is a small upland hunting area located along I-35.

Skunk River Flats • 26995 Sand Hill Trail, Ames • 123 acres

Skunk River Flats, a public hunting area, is owned by the Iowa DNR but managed by SCC. It was purchased through the Natural Resource Conservation Services wetlands program. A small area of floodplain forest is present near the Skunk River, but the area is mostly reconstructed prairie with a small restored wetland. A parking area and a mowed perimeter path are maintained.

Major Projects During the Year

Staff mowed prairie to control brush and weeds. A total of 83 acres was burned in March 2015.

Sleepy Hollow • 646 West Riverside Road, Ames • 13 acres

This park serves as a water trail access on the Skunk River. Canoeing and stream fishing are activities available at this area.

Soper's Mill • 56364 170th Street, Ames • 16 acres

Soper's Mill is a historic site on the Skunk River. Recreational opportunities include canoeing, kayaking, stream fishing, hiking, and forest/upland hunting.

Major Project During the Year

Overhead and trailside vegetation on the trail to Bear Creek was cleared during the June TEAM day.

Wakefield Woods • 2480 East 190th Street, Ames • 10 acres

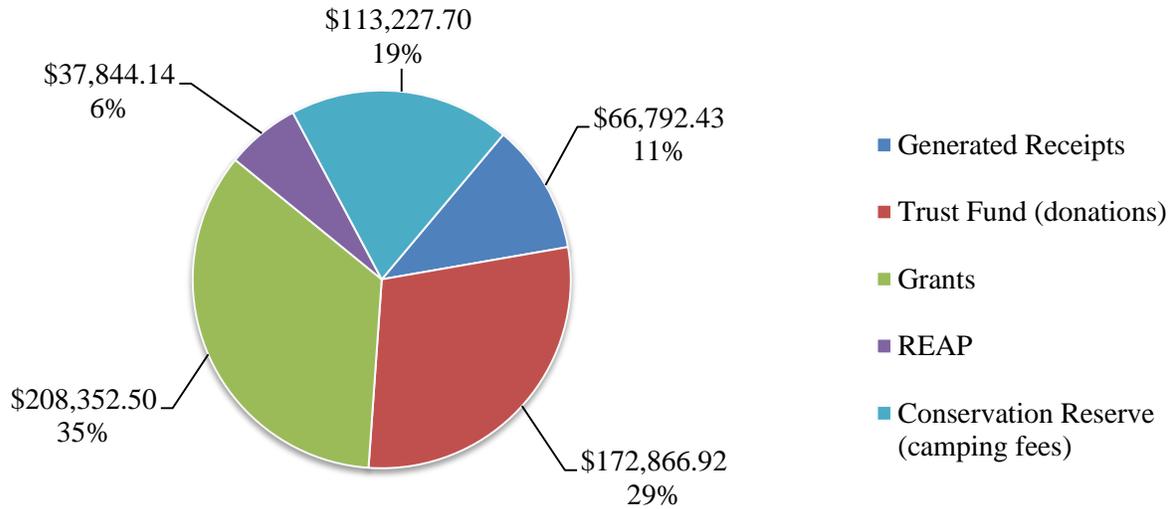
This oak-hickory woodland and prairie savanna was donated to the conservation board in 1988 by John and Anne Wakefield.

Major Project During the Year

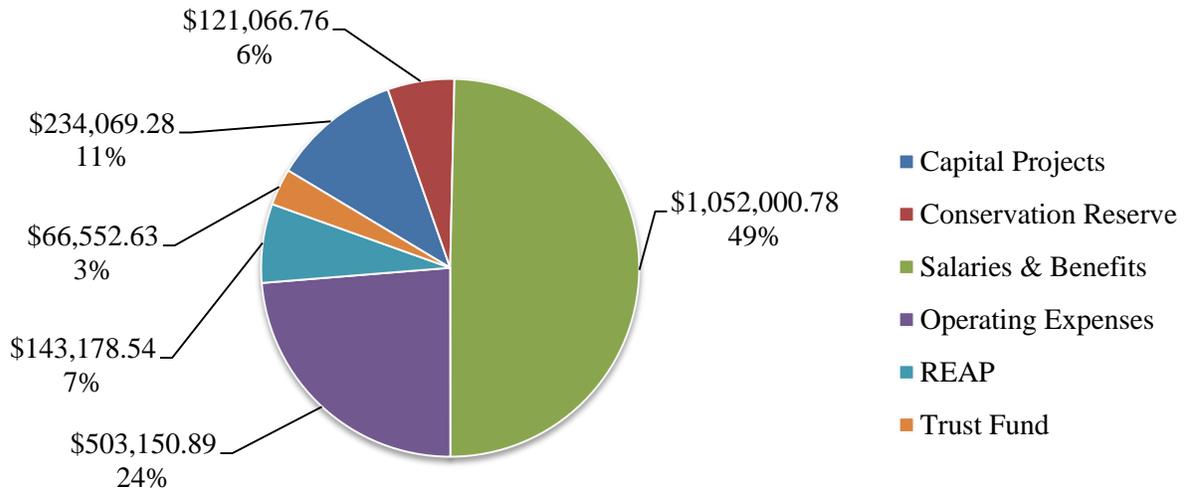
A controlled burn was completed in late fall. Large, dead oak and hickory trees were cut down and used at the Dakins Lake playground.

Financial Reports

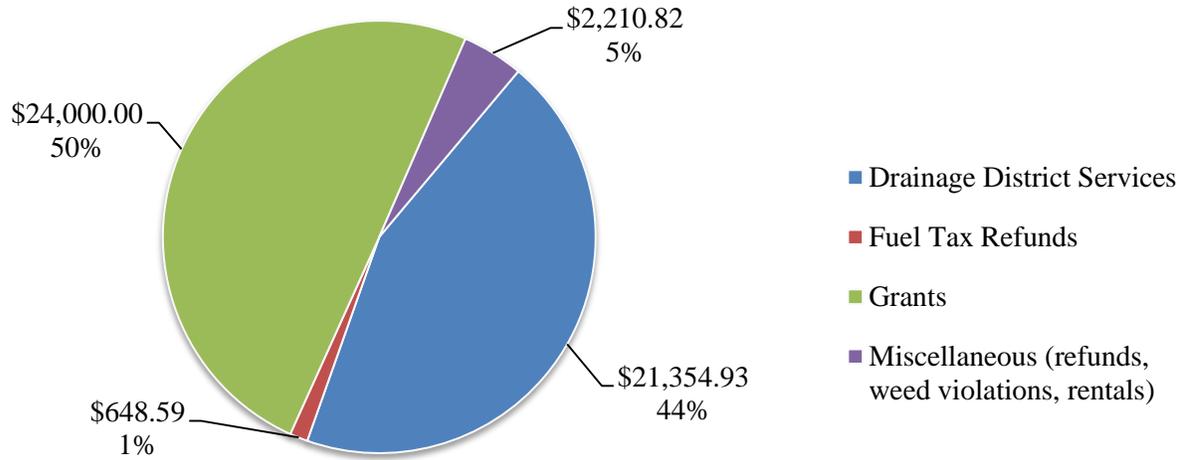
Conservation Revenue by Category \$599,083.69



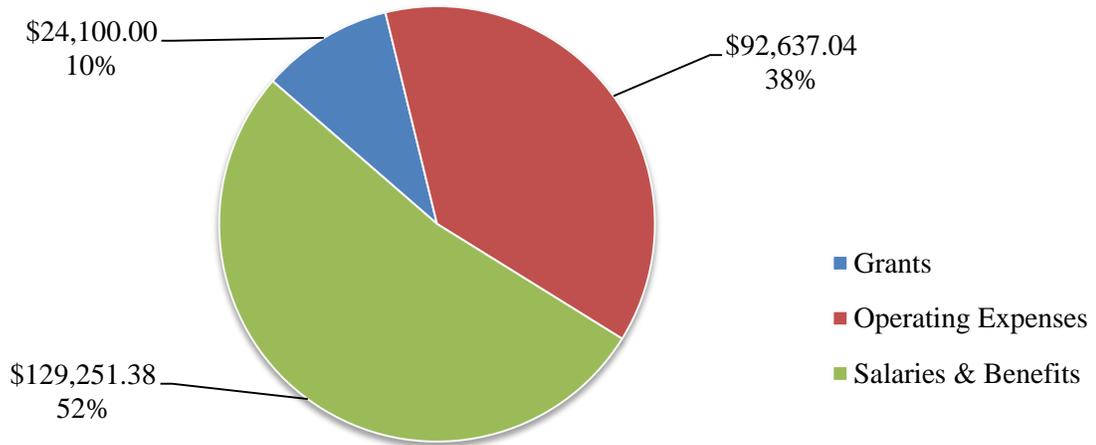
Conservation Expenses by Category \$2,120,108.88



IRVM Revenue - \$48,214.34



IRVM Expenditures - \$245,988.42



**STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
RESOURCE AND ENHANCEMENT PROTECTION PROGRAM (REAP)
ACCOUNT SUMMARY, FY1990-FY2015**

ENDING BALANCE - 6/30/15 = \$5,103.16

REVENUE

Fiscal Year	Per County and Per Capita Distributions	Interest Earned on Account	Grants and Reimbursements	Total FY Revenue
FY90-FY05	\$362,604.00	\$24,713.09	\$69,379.50	\$456,943.43
FY06	\$12,685.00	\$1,242.92	\$3,993.60	\$17,921.52
FY07	\$32,180.00	\$2,952.07	\$0.00	\$35,132.07
FY08	\$43,395.00	\$3,133.80	\$0.00	\$46,528.80
FY09	\$41,754.00	\$1,678.46	\$0.00	\$43,432.46
FY10	\$40,604.00	\$1,084.15	\$500.00	\$42,188.15
FY11	\$35,054.00	\$397.72	\$0.00	\$35,451.72
FY12	\$27,714.00	\$240.27	\$0.00	\$27,954.27
FY13	\$25,848.00	\$249.30	\$0.00	\$26,097.30
FY14	\$38,236.00	\$390.79	\$36,090.25	\$74,717.04
FY15	\$37,503.00	\$341.14	\$0.00	\$37,844.14
Totals	\$697,577.00	\$36,423.71	\$109,963.35	\$844,210.90

EXPENDITURES

Fiscal Year	Land Acquisition	Facility Development and Renovation	Equipment, Supplies, and Staff	Total FY Expenditures
FY90-FY05	\$55,154.78	\$291,526.28	\$53,819.32	\$400,500.38
FY06	\$2,640.00	\$0.00	\$9,796.35	\$12,436.35
FY07	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
FY08	\$0.00	\$20,862.75	\$0.00	\$20,862.75
FY09	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
FY10	\$0.00	\$111,660.75	\$500.00	\$112,160.75
FY11	\$0.00	\$87,684.78	\$0.00	\$87,684.78
FY12	\$0.00	\$3,469.12	\$0.00	\$3,469.12
FY13	\$39,500.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$40,500.00
FY14	\$0.00	\$17,315.07	\$0.00	\$17,315.07
FY15	\$0.00	\$143,178.54	\$0.00	\$143,178.54
Totals	\$98,294.78	\$676,697.29	\$64,115.67	\$839,107.74

Grants Awarded*

Grant	Project	Amount
Iowa Department of Transportation		
- Living Roadway Trust Fund Grant	Seed Drill	\$ 100
- Living Roadway Trust Fund Grant	Bowie Hydroseeder	\$ 24,000
Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)		
- Lakes Program	Hickory Grove Lake	
	Watershed Improvements	\$ 199,788
IDNR Wildlife Diversity Grant	Dakins Lake Prairie Restoration	\$ 3,510
IDNR/Alliant Energy	Operation ReLeaf 2014	\$ 19,945
Outdoor Alliance of Story County	Service Learning Bus Scholarships	\$ 2,000
TOTAL		\$ 249,343

*These grants awarded in FY15. Expenditures and reimbursements may occur in other fiscal years.

Board and Staff Development

Board members and staff attended the following educational programs during FY15:

“Colors” personality session
 Commercial Drivers License training
 County Conservation Peace Officers Association
 Excelling As a Manager or Supervisor
 Grammar Refresher
 Great Rivers and Lakes Conference
 Invasive Species Conference
 Iowa Association of County Conservation Board Employees Workshop
 Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards Fall Conference
 Iowa Association of Naturalists Workshops
 Iowa Bicycle Coalition
 Iowa Law Enforcement Academy (Basic Level Training)
 Iowa Weed Commissioners Conference
 Leadership and Team Building Conference
 Midwest Fire Conference
 National Association of Interpreters Region 5 Workshop
 Pesticide applicator re-certification
 Volunteer Management Training Webinar Series
 Wilderness First Aid Training
 Writing Essentials

Board Meeting Attendance

(P = present; A = absent)

DATE	Tedesco Term Expires 12/31/13	Hornstein Term Expires 12/31/14	Pease Term Expires 12/31/15	Weber Term Expires 12/31/16	Meyers Term Expires 12/31/17	Clinton (EO) Term Expires 12/31/16
7/14/14	P	P	P	A	P	A
8/20/14	P	P	P	P	P	P
9/8/14	P	P	P	P	A	A
10/6/14	A	P	P	P	P	P
11/12/14	P	P	P	P	P	A
11/17/14	P	P	P	P	P	P
12/1/14	P	P	P	P	P	A
	Tedesco Term Expires 12/31/18	Franz Term Expires 12/31/19	Pease Term Expires 12/31/15	Weber Term Expires 12/31/16	Meyers Term Expires 12/31/17	Clinton (EO) Term Expires 12/31/16
1/12/15	P	P	P	P	P	P
2/9/15	P	P	P	A	P	P
3/9/15	P	P	P	P	P	P
4/1/15	P	P (via phone)	P	P	P	P
4/13/15	P	P	A	P	P	P
5/4/15	P	P	P	P	P	P
6/8/15	P	P	P	P	P	P

Board Meeting Highlights

July 14, 2014

The board approved a request from Story County Pheasants Forever to hold a veterans pheasant hunt at Ketelsen Greenwing Marsh on September 20, 2014 and a youth hunt on October 11, 2014 at West Peterson Park. Also approved were a resolution endorsing a grant application from the City of Slater for REAP funding to hard surface the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT) in Slater and a contract with Jensen Excavating for FEMA-funded repairs on the HOINT.

Director Cox reported that Shive-Hattery will prepare a proposal to extend the sewer at Dakins Lake to ten of the new campsites at an estimated cost of \$35,000. Letters will be sent to Representatives King and Latham for their assistance with the Army Corps of Engineers project. The board sent a tentative date of November 14, 2014 for a legislators reception.

August 20, 2014

The board met at Dakins Lake to review progress on the park expansion project followed by their regular monthly meeting at the Dakins Community Center in Zearing.

One bid was received for resurfacing portions of the HOINT and the Praeri Rail Trail damaged by flooding. Due to insufficient funds and bidding of incorrect products, the board voted to re-bid the project. Change order #2 for Phase 2 of the Dakins Lake Expansion project was approved with recommendation for approval by the Story County Board of Supervisors.

Board member Tedesco and Director Cox reported on a meeting regarding a potential project with the ISU Research Park. Cox stated that the Army Corps of Engineers will present a memorandum of understanding for acquisition of property in the Skunk River Greenbelt. The board reviewed plans for the legislators reception.

September 8, 2014

A resolution temporarily suspending the refuge status at Hickory Grove Park for a controlled goose hunt from October 5, 2014 through January 9, 2015 was approved, and the board approved a donation of \$1,500 to the Ames Area Amateur Astronomers from SCC Partners towards the purchase of a telescope mount.

The Outdoor Alliance of Story County has signed a memorandum of understanding with SCC to subsidize bussing costs for service learning projects at SCC. The board reviewed a draft of the SCC Strategic Plan. Cox distributed tentative plans for the legislators reception as well as handouts on the Story County's Capital Improvement Plan.

October 6, 2014

The board re-affirmed the SCC Strategic Plan, adopted a FY15 legislative session position paper, approved a Living Roadway Trust Fund grant agreement for the purchase of a hydroseeder, recommended change order #3 for the Dakins Lake Expansion Project, Phase 2, for approval by the Story County Board of Supervisors, and voted to grant a utility permit on the HOINT to the City of Cambridge. The board also reviewed bid proposals for resurfacing portions of the

HOINT and the Praeri Rail Trail, recommending to the Story County Supervisors that the bid for \$111,342 be awarded to Con-Struct.

Environmental Education Coordinator Jerry Keys gave an update on the environmental education program, highlighting programs and activities over the past year. New staff includes Naturalist Rebekah Beall Warburton and Outreach Coordinator Erica Eaves.

Updates for the legislators reception on November 14 were discussed. Director Cox reported that rainy weather has slowed progress on the Dakins Lake Expansion Project. Two ISU students have been hired to conduct a trails inventory and start work on SCC's comprehensive recreation plan. The board enjoyed seeing photos of healthy fish sampled at Dakins Lake.

November 12, 2014

The board met at the ISU Research Park to discuss a potential partnership with the city, county, and ISU which could serve as a model of construction techniques for green spaces and developments. The board also approved a resolution of support for a Water Quality Initiative Targeted Demonstration Watershed Project for the East Indian Creek Watershed and the Squaw Creek Watershed.

November 17, 2014

Conservation and IRVM budget proposals for FY16 were reviewed and discussed by the board. The placement of three memorial benches at Dakins Lake was approved.

Director Cox gave updates on FEMA-funded repairs on trails, the Hickory Grove Watershed project, and construction on the Dakins Lake Expansion Project.

December 1, 2014

Additions/changes to the FY16 budget proposals, including salary adjustments, were discussed, and the board approved the budget proposals for submittal to the county auditor. The board approved the placement of a memorial bench at Hickory Grove Park and set 2015 board meeting dates on the second Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

The director distributed and reviewed a draft of the proposed agreement with the ISU Research Park plus preliminary capital cost opinions on trails and natural resource improvements.

January 12, 2015

Vice-chair Tedesco administered the oath of office to new board member Dr. Nancy Franz and acknowledged Joyce Hornstein for her ten years of service to SCC. The following officers were elected for 2015: Ted Tedesco, chair; Craig Meyers, vice-chair, and Allen Weber, secretary.

The board approved an amendment to the agreement with Shive-Hattery, Inc. for design services for the Dakins Lake Expansion Project, a resolution of support for a Living Roadway Trust Fund grant to purchase a Truax seed drill, resolutions approving signature authority for checking accounts with State Bank and Trust for Iowa hunting and fishing licenses and on-line payments, and an application for a payment gateway and on-line merchant account with Authorize.net. The director gave updates on the ISU Research Park agreement, work on the Hickory Grove Watershed project, progress on an application of a Water Quality Initiative Grant, delays on the

Dakins Lake Expansion Project construction due to weather, proposed staff salary increases for FY16, and upcoming changes to the flexible benefit package for county employees.



Story County Conservation Board – 2015
Standing (left to right): Al Weber, Craig Meyers, Ted Tedesco
Seated: Dr. Nancy Franz, Dr. Jim Pease, Wayne Clinton

February 9, 2015

County attorneys Holmes and Reynolds were present to answer questions about the proposed Bakken pipeline and explained eminent domain and exceptions to the law.

Mike Meetz announced the 2014 Olav Smedal Conservation Award, sponsored by the Ames Chapter Izaak Walton League of America and the Story County Conservation Board, recognized Mike Todd, an environmental science teacher at Ames High School.

The board approved an easement agreement and utility permit at Ketelsen Greenwing Marsh with Alliant Energy and Interstate Power and Light.

Park Ranger Ryan Wiemold presented an overview of work accomplished by the Skunk River Unit in 2014. Director Michael Cox sent questions to the Iowa Utilities Board about the proposed Bakken Pipeline, a new project deadline has been set for the Dakins Lake Expansion project, and work continues on the ISU Research Park agreement.

March 9, 2015

The board voted to recommend approval of a real estate contract among the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Story County, and Pleasant Grove Community Church to the Story County Board of Supervisors. The board approved first readings to SCC Board By-laws, Rules and Regulations, Child Safety Handbook, and Safety and Health Management Policy. Chair Tedesco

assigned board member Franz to review SCC policies and procedures and present more concise documents for second readings.

Cox announced that the Water Quality Institute grant submitted by Prairie Rivers was approved at the funding amount requested. The administrative staff is making on-line program registrations and payments available for upcoming summer nature camps. A consultant has been hired to develop the county's comprehensive plan.

Tedesco asked board members to consider the director's annual evaluation and send comments to him as soon as possible. After he meets with Cox, Tedesco will submit the completed evaluation to the county's human resources director.

April 1, 2015

The SCC Board and the Story County Planning and Zoning Commission met to receive updates on the county's comprehensive plan. Story County Outreach and Special Projects Manager Leanne Harter presented information on the Cornerstone to Capstone (C2C) project. The boards also heard presentations from Chris Jansen, MSA, and Chris Shires, Confluence, regarding the consultants' plan to develop the comprehensive plan. Questions and comments were received from attendees.

The SCC Board met following the joint meeting with the Story County Planning and Zoning Commission.

The board approved a contract with Patrician Jensen to serve as the 2015 Hickory Grove campground attendant and awarded a contract to Dan Moody Excavating for repairs on the HOINT.

Steve Carter from the ISU Research Park was present to share information about the proposed agreement with Story County. Director Cox gave more details on the project and distributed a draft of cost opinions.

Board members gave committee reports. Tedesco confirmed that the director's evaluation was completed and filed with the county's human resources office. Tedesco and Meyers will attend Park Ranger Feilmeier's graduation from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy on April 10.

April 13, 2015

The board approved a grazing lease agreement with Finch Livestock Exchange for goats at Robison Wildlife Acres, a 2015 campground attendant contract at Dakins Lake with Ashley Jones, and placement of a memorial bench at Dakins Lake. The board also voted to approve second readings of revisions to the SCC Board By-laws.

Outreach Coordinator Erica Eaves gave a report on SCC's volunteer and outreach efforts during the past year.

Cox reported that the punch list for Dakins Lake construction was completed today. Financial Data Manager Van Waus announced that April 18 will be the first day for on-line registrations and payments for environmental education programs.

Board members reported on their participation in the Partners Photo Contest, TEAM day, and Outdoor Alliance of Story County. Clinton said the board of supervisors continues to pursue health insurance options for county employees.

May 4, 2015

Natural Resource Specialist Amy Yoakum gave a presentation highlighting natural resources work during the past year.

Park Ranger Lucas Feilmeier was sworn in as a Story County peace officer.

The board approved a performance agreement/conservation easement between Robert and Joanie Jamison and SCC for Hickory Grove Watershed Improvements, salary adjustments for Special Projects Ranger Carol Williams and Park Ranger Ryan Wiemold, and second readings of revisions to SCC Rules and Regulations, Child Safety Handbook, and Safety and Health Management Policy. The board also voted to recommend approval of final plans for Hickory Grove Watershed Improvements, Phase I, to the board of supervisors and authorize solicitation of bids.

Board members reported on the Partners Spring Festival, an upcoming Outdoor Alliance of Story County meeting, attendance at IWill events, and a memorial service for founding board member Bill Horine on May 31.

June 8, 2015

Board chair Tedesco announced the Dakins Lake dedication on June 27 at 10:30 a.m. Director Cox added there will be speeches and a community picnic to celebrate. Special Projects Ranger Carol Williams gave a PowerPoint updated the board on the Dakins Lake Expansion Project, law enforcement, trails, Partners, and special events.

The board approved FY16 cost-of-living increases for SCC staff, employment of Benjamin Marcus (conservation technician) effective June 15, 2015, a contract with Bob Jamison for tree removal and fence installation for Hickory Grove Watershed Improvements, Phase I, and purchase of a trail drag for limestone trail maintenance. The board voted to recommend approval of the following to the board of supervisors: an agreement with the City of Zeoring for water and wastewater services for Dakins Lake; change order #5 with Smith Seeding, Inc. for the Dakins Lake Expansion Project, Phase 2; amendment #6 with Shive-Hattery for the Dakins Lake Expansion Project, Phase 2; and award of a contract for Hickory Grove Watershed Improvements, Phase 1, to Smith Seeding, Inc.

Director Cox reported that negotiations are ongoing for the ISU Research Park Agreement, and a memorandum of understanding was received from the Army Corps of Engineers for property in the Skunk River Greenbelt. An outline of the county's C2C Plan was distributed.