

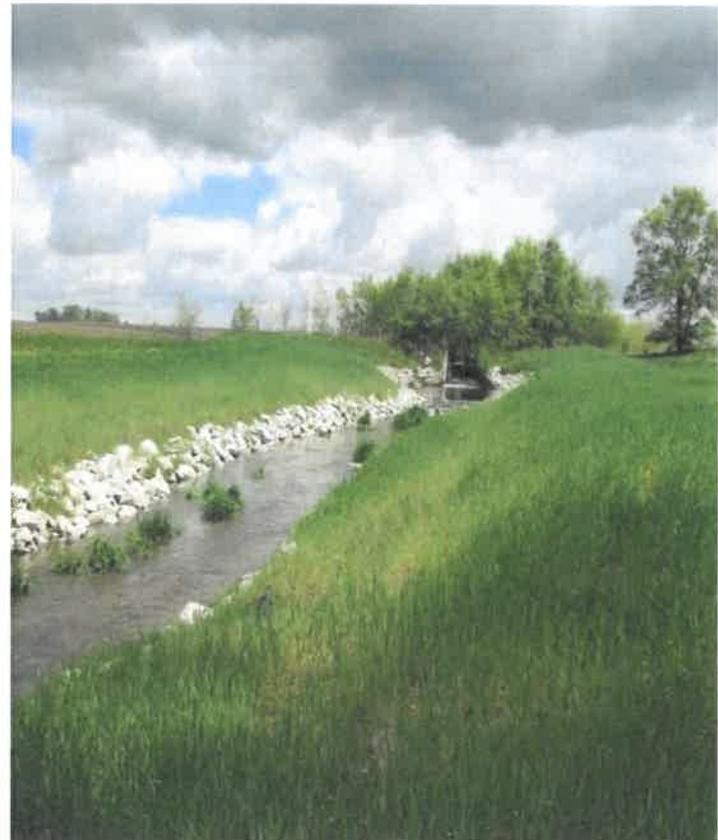
FY16 Annual Report

July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016



Hickory Grove Watershed Improvement Project

Before (above) and after (right) photos of stream restoration and bank stabilization completed during Phase I of the 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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Welcome
By Michael Cox, Director

Story County Conservation achieved many goals this year, from environmental education goals to resource management goals to roadside goals to parks and recreation goals. Our strategic planning gives us goals and direction for all of our programs--goals that heighten our quality of life and the quality of our natural resources.

As you review this report, you will find that our work strives to make Story County a wonderful place in which to live, work, and play. Across all sectors of our work, we educate and strive to empower our citizens to enjoy and take care of the outdoors. We have a long and rich history of bringing conservation awareness to people. It is often these same people who make our work possible and successful. Only by community partnerships and support are we enabled to have a lasting impact. For this support, we are very grateful. The staff and board are committed to making a difference, and we encourage you to join us.

A momentous occasion this year was the retirement of Carol Williams--long-time employee and friend. Carol served Story County Conservation for almost 30 years and has left a lasting impact on the community. We wish her well in her future ventures. Thank you Carol!

This year was also a year of much planning for future improvements. This planning effort ranged from water quality improvements, recreational trail development, land acquisition for wildlife areas, an environmental stewardship demonstration corridor, and county-wide inventories of our natural resources and water quality.



May 2016 - Carol Williams, special projects ranger, retires from Story County Conservation.


Mike Cox, Director


Craig Meyers, Chair

Story County Conservation Board

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

2016 – Craig Meyers (chair); Dr. Nancy Franz (vice-chair); Allen Weber (secretary);
Ted Tedesco; Dr. Jim Pease; Wayne Clinton (ex-officio)

Story County Board of Supervisors

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

2016 – Paul Toot (chair), Rick Sanders (vice-chair); Wayne Clinton
Effective June 7, 2016 Rick Sanders (chair); Wayne Clinton (vice-chair); Marty Chitty



Paul Toot
In memoriam
1/30/59 – 5/6/16



Rick Sanders



Wayne Clinton



Martin Chitty

Story County Conservation Staff

Administration

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

Environmental Education

Environmental Education Coordinator – Jerry Keys
Naturalists –Heather Hucka, Emily Herring (through 8/8/15), Jessica Lancial,
Rebekah Beall Warburton, Elizabeth Waage
Outreach Coordinator –Erica Eaves
Summer Naturalists, 2015 –Summer Thorsten, Kasey Troxel
Summer Naturalists, 2016 – Ryan McPherran, Bobbi Provost

Special Projects

Special Projects Ranger – Carol Williams (through 5/26/16)

Natural Resources

Natural Resource Specialist – Amy Yoakum
Natural Resource Aides, 2015 – Will Hilsabeck, Ryan Mullins, Calla Olson
Natural Resource Aides, 2016 – Fiona Flatt, Michael Mann

Parks Superintendent

Ryan Wiemold (new position 6/28/16)

Skunk River Unit

Park Ranger – Ryan Wiemold (through 6/27/16)
Conservation Technician II – Danny Simcox
Conservation Technicians – Joe Hill, Benjamin Marcus
Park Aides, 2015 – Danielle Blaylock, Cody Moore, Matthew Shanklin
Park Aides, 2016 – Danielle Blaylock, Seth Dicks, Matthew Shanklin
Park Ranger Aide, 2015 – Steven Donahue; 2016 Nick Steinle

Indian Creek Unit

Park Ranger – Luke Feilmeier
Conservation Technicians – Russ DeWall, Beau Hoppe
Park Aides, 2015 – Casy Angell, Zach Jamison, Blake Jesse, Joel Schwarzkopf
Park Aides, 2016 – Casy Angell, Zach Jamison, Blake Jesse, Lauren White
Waterfront Aides, 2015 – Saryn Case, Baylee Milam, Benjamin Toot, Josie Wierson
Waterfront Aides, 2016 – Kathleen Baldwin, Cierra Johannes, Elizabeth Noble

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management

Vegetation Management Biologist – Joe Kooiker
Vegetation Management Specialist – Tyler Kelley
Vegetation Management Aides, 2015 – Megan Dohrman, Patrick Ives
Vegetation Management Aides, 2016 – Megan Dohrman, Owen Shawgo

Environmental Education

Programs and Events Overview

Story County Conservation conducted 1,039 programs (resulting in 29,474 contacts) through 651 indoor presentations, 361 outdoor experiences, and 27 service learning opportunities.

Naturalist Elizabeth Waage joined the staff on September 21, 2015.



June 2016 – Nature Camp “Waterbugs” search for aquatic creatures in Bear Creek.

During FY16, funding from the Outdoor Alliance of Story County provided bussing fees to schools that conducted service learning to remove invasive plants and hand harvest prairie seed on SCC properties. Nine schools requested 15 busses for 12 service learning events. Two schools submitted more than one funding request (Colo-Nesco and Sawyer Elementary), and the Gilbert Intermediate School 5th grade required two days to accommodate a large number of students. Three of those events were cancelled due to rain, and two schools did not submit requests for reimbursement.

Staff collaborated with the Ames Area Amateur Astronomers, Central Iowa Prairie Network, and other groups to provide 24 public programs and events, resulting in an additional 1,737 contacts. Schools, youth groups, hunter education classes, church groups, and other groups borrowed Story County Conservation environmental education supplies for their programs.



December 2015 – Participants try out snowshoes at a program at McFarland Park led by SCC naturalists.

Outreach

The quarterly *Prairie Horizons* newsletter provides articles and a schedule of SCC programs, events, and meetings. It was distributed in both printed and electronic versions. The number of subscriptions totaled 1,810 mailed and 512 electronic. An additional 535 copies were distributed to area libraries, city halls, and businesses. Special event fliers were created and distributed to schools, groups, and local businesses to publicize programs.

Eighty-six 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 FY16, SCC had 2,021 "fans," a 27% increase over FY15. Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram were other social media platforms used to promote outreach.

Volunteers

Volunteers are integral in attaining SCC's mission. Volunteer hours logged in FY16 included: 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.

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 Volunteer Center of Story County website. Various student and adult organizations were matched to SCC volunteer tasks to complete service projects.



July 2015 – Ames Town & Country Kiwanis members and SCC staff building a pergola on the Touch-A-Life Trail.

While some volunteers chose to donate time by themselves (325 individuals), 37 businesses, schools, or clubs volunteered as well. Over 4,600 hours were donated by volunteers in FY16—equivalent to 2.2 full-time staff. Using the Independent Sector volunteer service value of \$22.25 per hour, volunteers provided \$102,765 of service to SCC in FY16.

Big changes to the volunteer program began in January as Story County Conservation joined the Service Enterprise Initiative. This came as the result of an internal volunteer needs assessment conducted in late 2015. The Service

Enterprise Initiative is a new training program offered by Points of Light across the county; the “hub” conducting our training was the Volunteer Center of Story County. Our journey started when select staff and volunteers completed a brief diagnostic about how well SCC utilizes volunteer resource allocation, outreach, tracking and evaluation, and planning and development. SCC's overall score was 71—indicating that while we were doing a lot of things right, we still had room for improvement. A team of three staff and one board member attended four training sessions with others who also wanted their organizations to become Service Enterprises. By the end of the trainings in May, we had a good start on our action plan—a two-page document listing specific items needed to improve the volunteer program including targeting recruitment of skills-based volunteers, increasing volunteer retention, hosting more groups in community volunteer

events, etc. Once considerable progress on this action plan is made, SCC will apply for certification as a Service Enterprise in FY17.

VOLUNTEER HOURS FY16 (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)		
Volunteer Category	Occurrences	Volunteer Hours
Administration	184	655.25
Environmental education	190	1,210.50
Special projects	285	708.75
Roadside program	59	173.25
Field	553	1,868.25
TOTALS	1,271	4,616.00

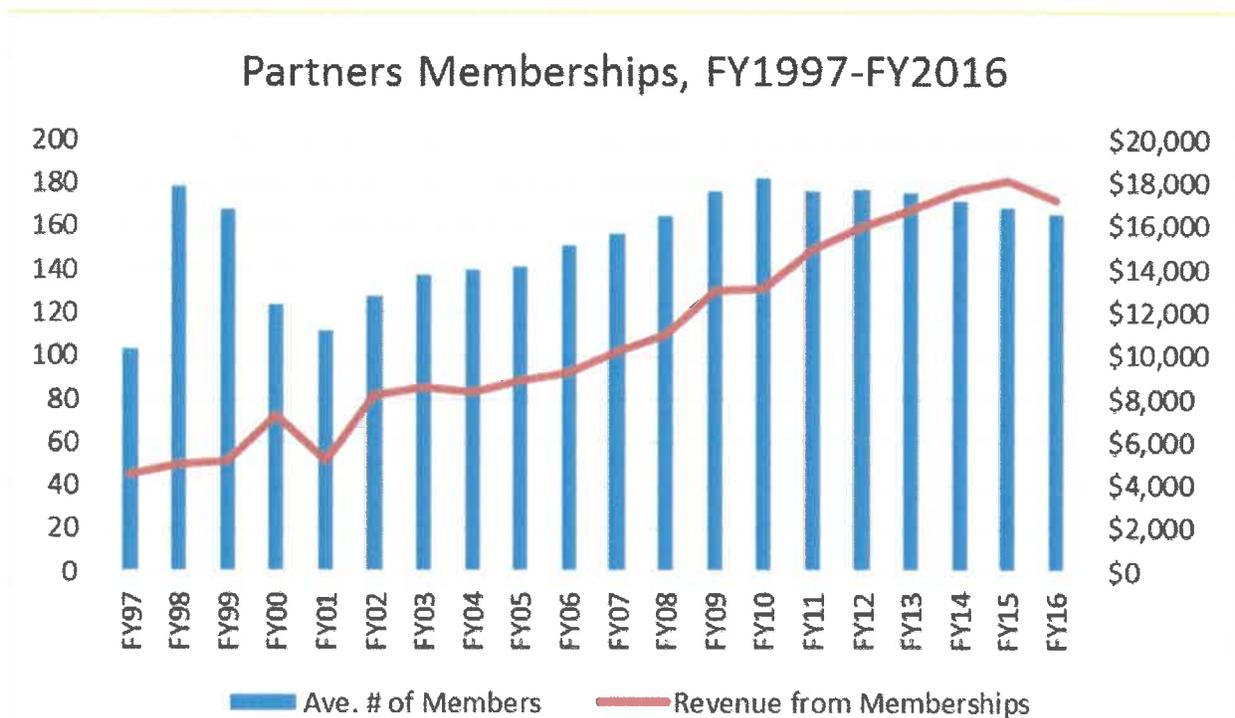


September 2015 – United Way Day of Caring Volunteers with Joe Kooiker and Amy Yoakum after hydroseeding at Dakins Lake

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 gives financial support towards 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 166 memberships during FY16, raising a total of \$17,252 in fees to support SCC.



The 2015 *Partners* Fall Festival on October 4 was a success with approximately 330 people participating in several crafts and activities. The theme was “Earthy, Sky, Water--Connecting through Creativity.” Chad Elliott provided music, and Ames C.art placed four pieces of thought-provoking art in the park. The spring festival was held on May 1 and featured a May Day theme. Approximately 225 people attended. A \$750 grant from the Ames Convention and Visitors Bureau provided funding for a dance troupe to entertain the festival goers.

The *Partners* annual meeting was held on February 27 with over 30 people in attendance. *Partners* provided funding for these Story County Conservation projects during FY16: Wild Women of the Woods (\$1,000), FLOAT IV nature camp (\$60), REAP-CEP pollinator grant (\$95), volunteer database software (\$270), and a cross-cut saw for TEAM days (\$460).

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management

FY16 goals for the Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) program included: completing Secondary Road Department's work orders in a timely manner, giving extra effort to cover/stabilizer seeding during the fall; continuing development and promotion of the drainage district maintenance program, placing emphasis on removing brush piles and spraying re-sprouts; providing support to the NRCS and landowners/operators needing technical advice and equipment for establishing native plant communities; and improving efficiency with record keeping.

Total seeding and mulching acres in the right-of-way were consistent with the 25-year average; however, there was a 300% increase in the number of sites seeded. The new hydroseeder ran well once staff resolved loading and rinsing processes.

Increased cost share amounts for set aside programs generated more interest in planting CRP acres in Story County. Equipment rented and acres seeded were up 800% from the previous year. Staff distributed 5,260 pounds of native grass and forb seed by networking with landowners and the local Pheasants Forever chapter.

Weed pressure in the right-of-way increased in 2016. The early spring and above-average moisture throughout the growing season was ideal for weed growth. The boom mower was utilized frequently to address site distance issues and perform maintenance on new plantings. Staff sprayed an average amount of centerline miles, but overall weed control was marginal. Media hype on wild parsnip plus tall thistle blooming in the fall added to the weed commissioner's duties. Noxious weed complaints were handled by phone or registered letter.

Due to time constraints, fewer miles of encroaching brush in the roadsides were sprayed. Staff were able to spray all of New Albany Township plus problem areas across the county. Brush causing site distance issues at intersections and bridges was cut and chipped. There was no contract for brush spraying in FY16.

A total of 265 pounds of useable seed was harvested with the combines from two seed nurseries. Seed amounts were below average, and the diversity of species was low. Hand-harvested seed collected at volunteer events and by staff made up for some of the low diversity from combined seed.



September 2015 – Elementary students collecting prairie seed.

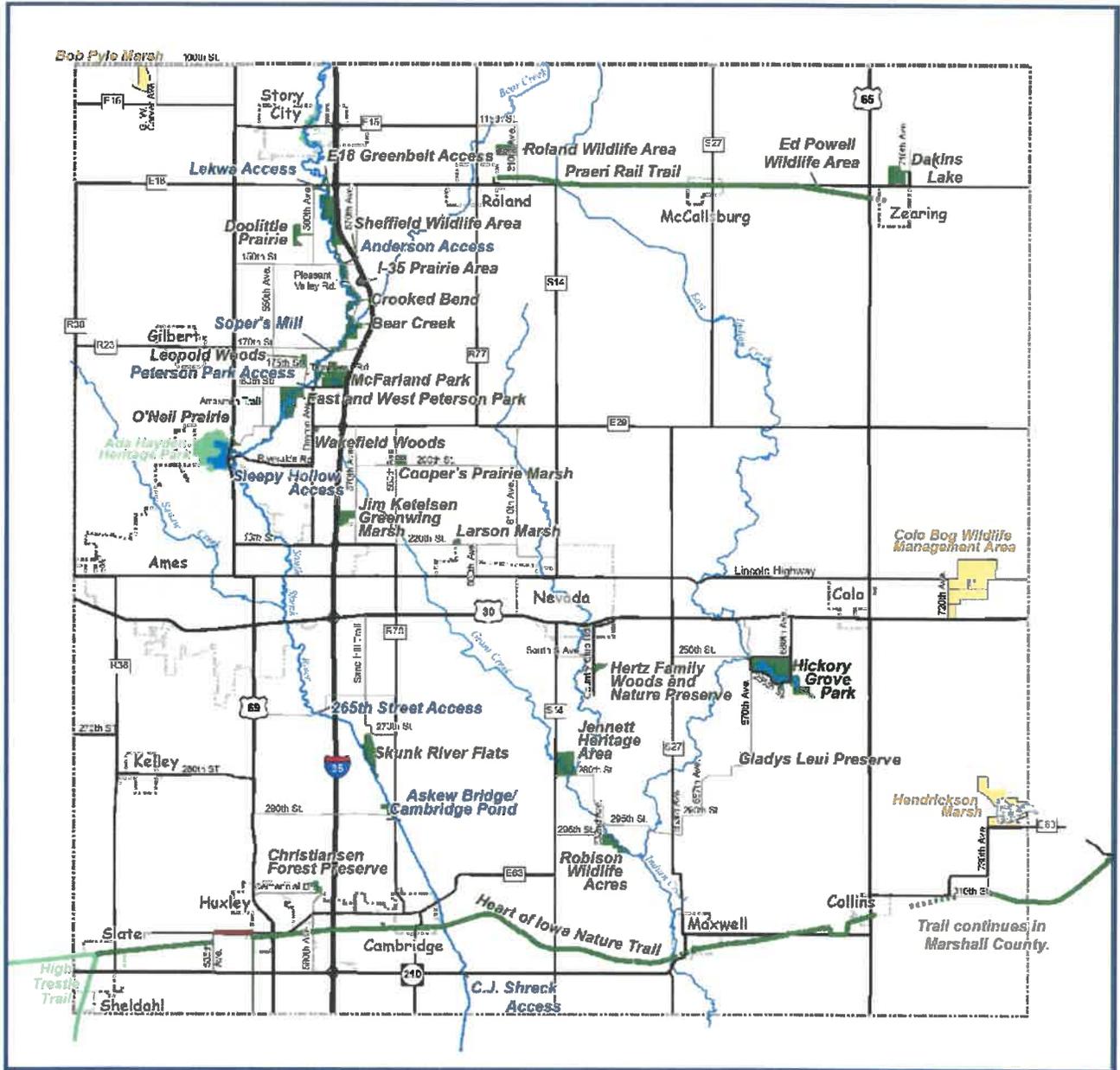
Drainage district maintenance was split into three different operations: burning brush piles, spraying, and winter logging. During August and September 2015, staff sprayed brush re-sprouts in nine drainage districts where brush had been removed. Over 13.75 miles of open ditches were treated with aquatic-labeled herbicides. Rough terrain and limited access created problems maintaining open ditches along several miles. Removal of brush piles began in December and continued into late spring. Cured brush piles left from previous cutting operations were burned in Hamilton-Story #1, Boone-Story #1, and the western half of Grant #5. A tractor and grapple were useful in packing the piles to burn. The remaining refuse was loaded and trucked to the county burn pile.

Grant #5 was the primary focus of cutting/logging operations in FY16. Trees not accessible from the ditch bank were cut from inside the open ditch. Waders, chainsaws, and several chains were used to cut hard-to-reach trees and drag them up out of the open ditch. Work was laborious and required a crew of three staff. Drainage district revenue totaled \$18,051.77.

Equipment and machinery improvements included the purchase of a 2016 Chevrolet 3500 pickup with flatbed, a Gramegna power ditch spade, and a Honda GX630 engine for the Brushwacker fire unit. The 1976 Massey Ferguson 230 tractor suffered major engine failure. The Nevada FFA Chapter is diagnosing the problem and doing a cost/benefit analysis on repairs.

IRVM FIELD OPERATIONS FY16 (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)	
Acres of roadsides seeded – 68 sites	39
Acres of contract plantings – 3 sites	3
Acres of conservation/other area planted	1.33
Acres of roadsides burned – 1 site	2.5
Acres of other burns/natural areas	0
Miles of roadsides sprayed (weeds)	212.5
Miles of brush foliar sprayed	83
Equipment rentals (1,100 acres)	37
Pounds of seed harvested	265
Drainage District Services (revenue received)	\$18,051.78
Drainage District Services (amount billed)	\$20,532.46

Story County Conservation Properties Map



Legend

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

Major Project During the Year

The canoe access launch was realigned and paved by the IDNR water trails crew.

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.

Major Project During the Year

A prescribed burn was conducted in the spring to slow woody encroachment into the prairie.

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. The suspension bridge was closed due to tree damage. A solution is being sought to remove trees and repair the bridge. A secondary trail was created to cross Bear Creek and get to Pleasant Valley Road.

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

A savanna area was restored.

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

This area supports a large population of upland and wetland wildlife and is a designated public hunting area. The agricultural land was restored to prairie.

Major Project During the Year

A prescribed burn was conducted in the spring.

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 Projects During the Year

A kiosk was installed at the picnic shelter, rock was placed around the perimeter of the rain garden, and invasive species were removed in the prairie restoration area. Old fence was cut and cleared, and trees were removed from the old fence line between the new campground and upper lake. A sand volleyball court was added at the primitive campground area.



October 2015 – Crappie being released into Dakins Lake.

Crappie (2,000) were stocked in the lake.

Sixty trees and shrubs were planted in the spring. Several turf areas were reseeded and fertilized for better coverage.

Doolittle Prairie • 14249 560th Ave, Story City • 40 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 16-acre Matheason Tract is owned by SCC. It contains native prairie areas and three potholes, providing valuable habitat for wetland wildlife. Doolittle Prairie is open to hunting.

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

The E-18 Greenbelt Access includes 29 acres of prairie, 7 acres of wetland, with the remainder wooded. Hiking, equestrian, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking trails are available. Hunting and trapping of forest and upland species is allowed.

Major Projects During the Year

A prescribed burn was conducted in the spring. Bridge abutments were repaired. Staff used the forestry mower to stop woody encroachment into the lower prairie areas.

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.

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 includes a six-acre reconstructed prairie. A small parking area is provided, but no trails are maintained.

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

The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail 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 the Chichaqua Valley Trail.

Major Projects During the Year

Re-surfacing on select spots on the trail was completed by a contractor. Staff removed spray painting by vandals on the bridge crossing the Skunk River.

A prescribed burn was conducted in the spring.

Brush and trees were cleared and the trail groomed between Highway 69 and Trailridge Park to assist the City of Huxley in their efforts to aid in paving the trail. The section was later paved.

A large concrete culvert adjacent to the trail was reset.

**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 SCC park. This multiple-use recreational area includes a 98-acre lake stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, channel catfish, and grass carp. Camping, boating, picnicking, hiking, and hunting are allowed.

Major Projects During the Year

Interior trails were extended between the Supervised Youth Camping area to Bobwhite Shelter and from the maintenance shop to Plover Bay Shelter. A storage shed was built for the beach, and ridge vents were installed on Oriole Ridge lodge. A memorial bench honoring the Stefani family was placed near the shelter at Plover Bay.

Conservation Corps Iowa (CCI) cleared brush from gullies for the ongoing watershed improvement project. Nevada High School students planted 24 trees, picked up sticks, and cut honeysuckle at the park on Earth Day.

Ash trees at Breezy Bay campground were assessed, GPS waypoints were marked, and eight trees were removed. A chainsaw artist carved designs from two of the ash tree stumps. Trees were trimmed to eliminate hazards, open views to the lake, and allow establishment of native grasses and forbs.

Prescribed burns on 18 acres were conducted on north and south portions of the lake in the fall, and another 10.2 acres were burned in the spring.

Fish habitat, including constructed pallets and evergreen trees, was added to the lake.

I-35 Prairie 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, including silver-leaved scurf pea, smooth blue aster, and marble seed. Remnant prairie exists 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 Projects During the Year

Native prairie seedings were mowed, interior fence was removed, and a tile outlet in the upper pond was unplugged. Prescribed burns were conducted in the spring. Prairie restorations were mowed on first, second, and third year seedings.

Wetland excavation and tile work were completed. Prairie was planted around the oxbow and on the new dike for the wetland enhancement project. An oxbow restoration was completed on Indian Creek on the south side of the property.



February 2016 – Oxbow restoration at Jennett Heritage Area.

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 Projects During the Year

A prescribed burn was conducted in the spring. Rock was added to low-flow crossings in several low spots, and tile repairs were made to the seams of tile running north/south through the property.

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.

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.

Major Project During the Year

The parking lot was expanded, and the canoe access approach/ramp was reconfigured by the IDNR water trails crew.

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, planted 20-year-old trees, and a small parking area. No improvements are allowed on the area due to deed restrictions.

Major Project During the Year

The parking lot was surfaced, and signs were replaced.

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

McFarland Park offers a variety of ecotypes including tallgrass prairie, woodland, and stream habitats. The administrative and environmental education staff are housed at the conservation center, and the building's multipurpose room is available for rent by the public. 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.



November 2015 – Staff conducting a prescribed burn at McFarland Park.

Major Projects During the Year

A pergola/swing was installed along the Touch-A-Life Trail by SCC staff and members of Ames Town and Country Kiwanis. A new trail to re-align the back trail loop to reduce erosion was cleared in two TEAM work days, and a prescribed burn was conducted in the spring. A tree was planted near the shelter in memory of founding board member Bill Horine.

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. Activities and scenic areas include a swimming beach (West Peterson), fishing, picnicking, bird watching, boating, hiking and equine trails, canoe access, and hunting.

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.

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

A prescribed burn was conducted in the spring.

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

Robison Wildlife Acres is a unique area in south-central Story County. 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, and a supervised youth camping area and remote camping site are available. The park is a wildlife refuge.

Major Projects During the Year

A prescribed burn was conducted in the spring, an outlet obstruction at the pond was removed, and a bridge and steps in the interior of the park were replaced by a CCI crew and conservation staff.

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

A prescribed burn was conducted 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 IDNR but managed by SCC. 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 Project During the Year

Staff removed willows from the prairie.

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

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

Soper's Mill · 16 acres

North (east of Skunk River): 56501 170th Street, Ames

South (west of river): 56364 170th Street, Ames

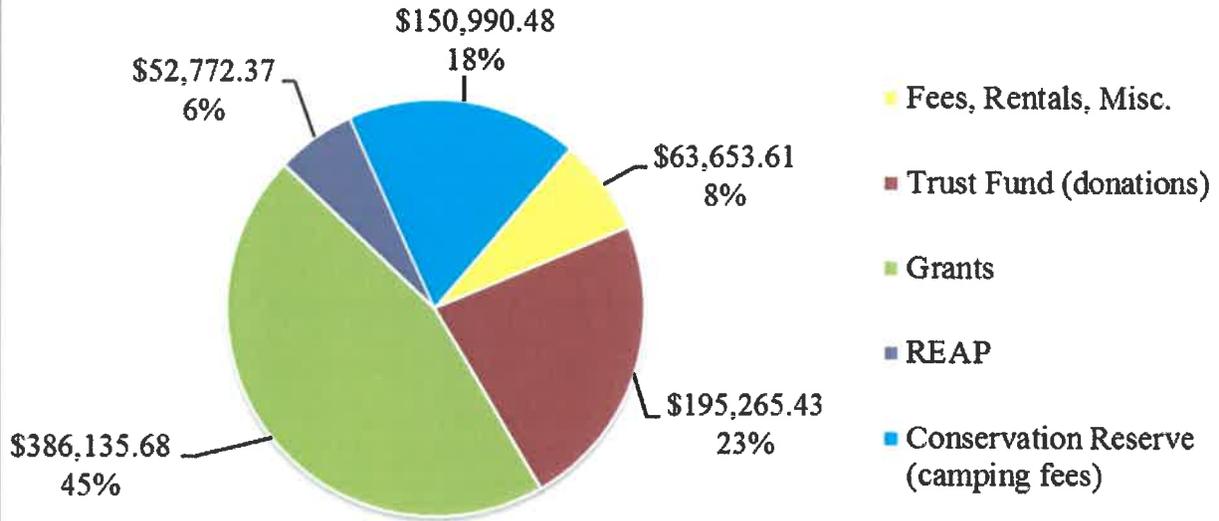
This Skunk River Water Trail access offers canoeing, kayaking, stream fishing, hiking, and forest/upland hunting.

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

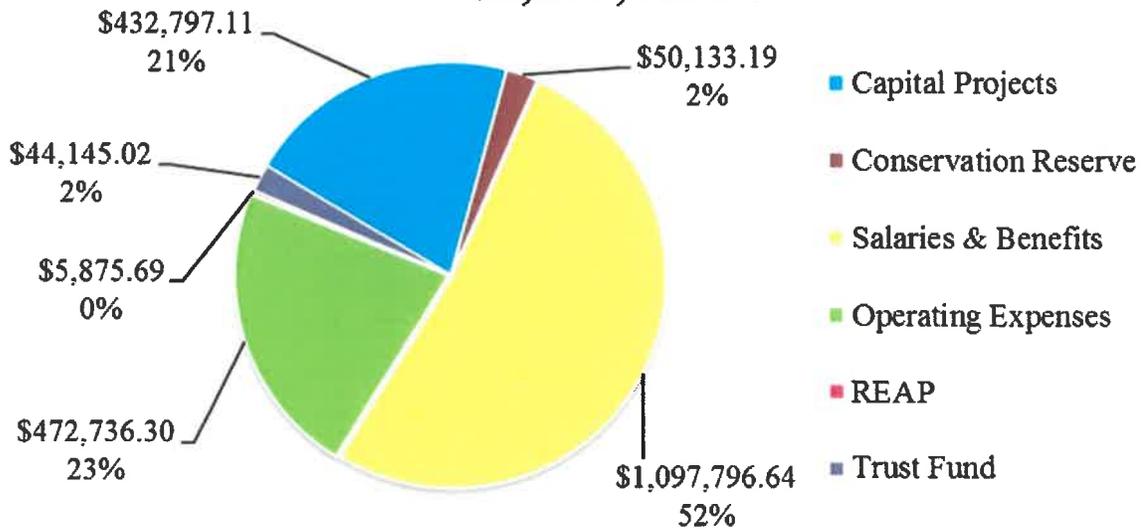
This oak-hickory woodland and prairie savanna provides picnicking and hiking.

Financial Reports

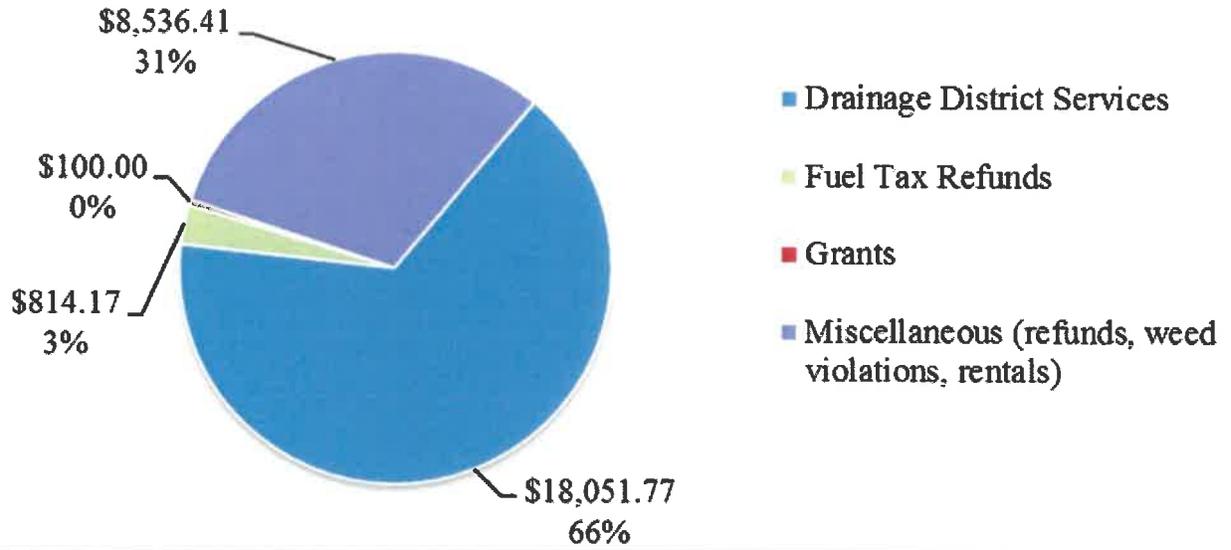
Conservation Revenue by Category \$848,817.57



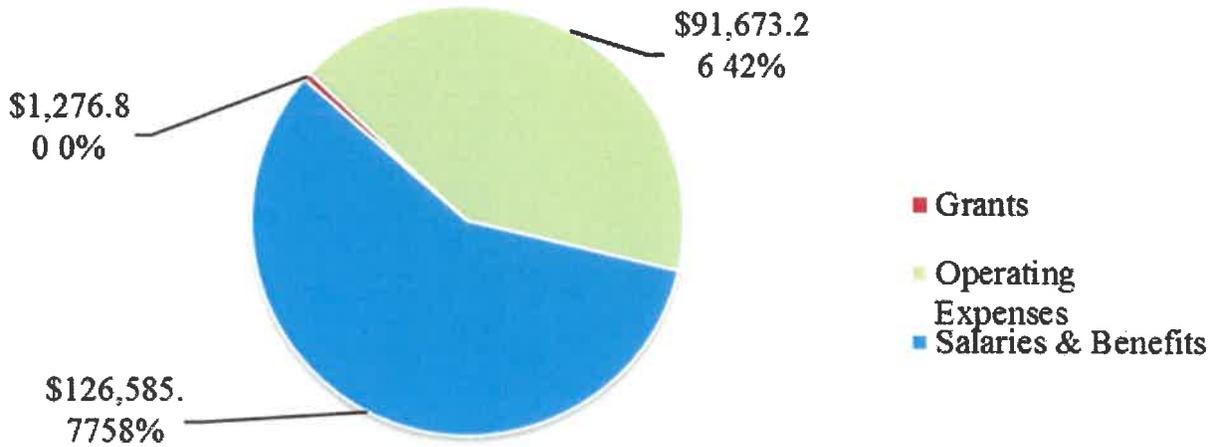
Conservation Expenses by Category \$2,103,483.95



IRVM Revenue - \$27,502.35



IRVM Expenditures - \$219,535.83



**STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
RESOURCE AND ENHANCEMENT PROTECTION PROGRAM (REAP)
ACCOUNT SUMMARY, FY1990 - FY2016**

ENDING BALANCE - 6/30/16 = \$51,999.84

REVENUE

Fiscal Year	Per County and Per Capita Distributions	Interest Earned on Account	Grants and Reimbursements	Total FY Revenue
FY90-FY06	\$375,289.00	\$25,956.01	\$73,373.10	\$474,864.95
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
FY16	\$37,562.00	\$134.91	\$15,075.46	\$52,772.37
Totals	\$735,139.00	\$36,558.62	\$125,038.81	\$896,983.27

EXPENDITURES

Fiscal Year	Land Acquisition	Facility Development and Renovation	Equipment, Supplies, and Staff	Total FY Expenditures
FY90-FY06	\$57,794.78	\$291,526.28	\$63,615.67	\$412,936.73
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
FY16	\$0.00	\$5,135.90	\$739.79	\$5,875.69
Totals	\$98,294.78	\$681,833.19	\$64,855.46	\$844,983.43

Facilities Usage and Revenue Comparison by Fiscal Year	FY16	FY15
Building rentals - multipurpose room	60	76
Lodge rentals - Hickory Grove	80	76
Shelter rentals - Dakins Lake	18	0
Special Events Permits	7	7
Camping nights - Dakins Lake Main Campground	1,700	0
Camping nights - Dakins Primitive Campground	394	146
Camping nights – Hickory Grove (Breezy Bay Campground)	6,348	5,727
Camping nights – Hickory Grove Primitive Campground	486	296
Camping nights - Supervised Youth Areas	18	28
Camping nights - Robison Wildlife Acres (remote camping)	13	11
Camping - Breezy Bay Campground	\$105,921.30	\$ 102,406.75
Camping - Hickory Grove Primitive Campground	\$ 6,788.43	\$ 4,325.95
Camping - Supervised Youth Areas	\$ 380.00	\$ 560.00
Camping - Dakins Lake Main Campground	\$ 32,413.00	\$ -
Camping - Dakins Lake Primitive Campground	\$ 5,436.75	\$ 8,138.00
Camping – Robison Wildlife Acres (remote camping)	\$ 79.00	\$ 83.00
Sale of Firewood	\$ 1,678.80	\$ 1,943.00
Hickory Grove Waterfront (concessions)	\$ 2,545.71	\$ 2,140.56
Boat Rentals	\$ 5,600.00	\$ 3,400.00

Grants Awarded*

Story County Community Foundation	Discovery Nature Playscape	\$ 25,000
Ames Convention and Visitors Bureau	Partners Spring Festival	\$ 1,000
Iowa Department of Transportation		
- Living Roadway Trust Fund Grant	Gramegna Spading Machine	\$ 11,491
Iowa Department of Natural Resources		
- REAP CEP Grant	Planting the Seeds	\$ 3,448
- Wildlife Diversity Program Grant (#2)	Dakins Lake Prairie Restoration	\$ 3,510
- Prairie Lakes 6 Wetlands Project (NAWCA)	Jennett Wetland Improvements	\$ 5,000
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program	Jennett Oxbow Restoration	\$ 5,000
Outdoor Alliance of Story County	Service Learning Bus Scholarships	\$ 1,500

*These grants were awarded in FY16. Expenditures and reimbursements may occur in other/additional fiscal years.

Board and Staff Development

Board members and staff attended the following educational programs during FY16:

Commercial Driver's License Training
 County Conservation Peace Officers Association Fall Workshop
 Grammar Refresher
 Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards Employees Workshop (Winterfest)
 Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards Fall Conference
 Iowa Association of Naturalists Fall and Spring Workshops
 Iowa Bicycle Coalition Summit
 Iowa Conservation Education Coalition Winter Workshop
 Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forestry Fire Program
 Iowa Department of Natural Resources River Canoe School
 Iowa Prairie Conference
 Iowa Water Conference
 Iowa Weed Commissioners Conference
 IOWATER Workshop
 Master River Stewards Training
 National Association of Interpreters Region 5 Workshop
 Pesticide Applicator Training and Recertification Training
 Sustaining Our Land Conference
 Volunteer Recruitment Webinar
 Water Rocks

Board Meeting Attendance

STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING ATTENDANCE
FISCAL YEAR 2016
(P = present; A = absent)

DATE	Pease Term Expires 12/31/15	Weber Term Expires 12/31/16	Meyers Term Expires 12/31/17	Tedesco Term Expires 12/31/18	Franz Term Expires 12/31/19	Clinton (EO) Term Expires 12/31/16
7/13/15	P	P	P	P	P	A
8/10/15	P	P	P	P	P	P
9/14/15	P	P	P	P	A	P
10/12/15	P	P	P	P	P	P
11/2/15	P	P	P	P	P	P
11/9/15	P	P	P	P	P	P
11/30/15	P	P	P	P	P	A
	Weber Term Expires 12/31/16	Meyers Term Expires 12/31/17	Tedesco Term Expires 12/31/18	Franz Term Expires 12/31/19	Pease Term Expires 12/31/20	Clinton (EO) Term Expires 12/31/16
1/5/16*	A	P	P	P	P	A
1/11/16	P	P	P	P	P	P
2/9/16	A	P	A	P	P	P
3/14/16	P	A	P	P (phone)	P	P
4/6/16*	A	P	P	P (phone)	P	A
4/11/16	P	P	P	P	P	P
5/9/16	P	P	P	P	P	P
6/13/16	P	P	A	P	P	A
6/27/16	P	P	P	P	P	A

*Special meeting called

Board Meeting Highlights

July 13, 2015

An agreement between SCC and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) for oxbow restoration at Jennett Heritage was approved by the board. Chris Shires from Confluence updated the board on the county's Cornerstone to Capstone (C2C) Plan. Shires shared comments from public input meetings and highlighted the trails components of the proposed plan.

Director Cox reported that he met with the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) regarding mitigation funding for the Iowa State University Research Park project, attended a pre-construction meeting for the Hickory Grove Watershed Improvement project, and met with a family interested in selling land to Story County. Cox and Park Ranger Feilmeier attended a reception at Camp Dodge to accept a Freedom Award from the Air National Guard. Cox announced that SCC received a bequest of 240 acres of land. The board acknowledged Director Cox and the entire Conservation staff for a successful Dakins Lake grand opening event.

August 10, 2015

The board approved FY16 longevity increases for Conservation staff and approved the SCC FY14 Annual Report.

Director Cox gave updates on the following: The Ames and Town Country Kiwanis group has completed construction of a pergola on the Touch-A-Life Trail, over 50 applications have been received for the open naturalist position, negotiations regarding the ISU Research Park project are continuing, and meetings are ongoing with Central Iowa Water Association for the Hickory Grove sewer project.

September 14, 2015

Park Ranger Luke Feilmeier reported on activities at the Indian Creek Unit the past year. Chris Shires, Confluence, distributed updates to the C2C Plan and took comments from the board for inclusion in the plan. Director Cox updated the board on a proposed agreement with the ISU Research Park, construction of the Bakken Pipeline, and a potential land acquisition in southern Story County. Cox reported that a proposal for installation of a lift station at Hickory Grove Park should be ready for consideration at the October meeting. Cox also distributed a preliminary plan for an extension of the Praeri Rail Trail through Zearing to Dakins Lake.

The board approved employment of Elizabeth Waage as a naturalist effective September 21, 2015, reaffirmed the SCC Strategic Plan, and approved a resolution suspending the refuge status at Hickory Grove Park for a controlled goose hunt from October 3, 2015–January 8, 2016.

October 12, 2015

The board approved the transfer of two seasonal employees from IRVM to Conservation effective October 4, 2015, a lease agreement with Vanco, Inc., a lease agreement with Michael and Linda Meetz, 2015-2016 wellness initiatives for staff, Resolution #2015-05 supporting funding of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, Resolution #2015-06 supporting acquisition of Jordan Acres Farm by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and an agreement with Central Iowa Water Association for a sewer connection to Hickory Grove Park

contingent on a signed agreement with Country Living Court. The board also recommended approval of an agreement with ISU Research Park for Phase 3 of the research development park to the Story County Board of Supervisors.

Environmental Education Coordinator Jerry Keys gave an update on the environmental education program.

Director Cox reported on the Hickory Grove Watershed Improvement project, a proposed pollinator program with the USF&WS, plans for the 2015 legislators reception, and the FY17 budget process.

November 2, 2015

The board met to receive information on the South Skunk River Water Trail from Mimi Wagner, IDNR consultant. Decisions on SCC's sponsorship and portions of the river designated as a water trail will be made at the December board meeting.

The board approved Resolution #2015-07—an agreement between SCC and the IDOT for a Living Roadway Trust Fund grant (\$12,768) to purchase a Gramegna spading machine.

November 9, 2015

Shannon Gapp, a planner for Confluence, reviewed updates on Chapter 4 of the county's comprehensive plan. The board suggested several additions and changes for the board of supervisors' approval in December.

Drafts of the Conservation and IRVM revenue and expenditure budget proposals for FY17 were reviewed and discussed, and the board approved the SCC Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

Cox announced receipt of a \$25,000 grant from the Story County Community Foundation for a natural playscape at McFarland Park and that SCC was named a beneficiary of the Maribeth A. Henney Revocable Trust. Tedesco and Meyers will be attending a public meeting on November 12 in Boone regarding Dakota Access and the Bakken Pipeline. A tree will be planted at McFarland Park on November 21 in memory of Bill Horine, a founding member of the SCC Board.

November 30, 2015

SCC 2016 board meeting dates were approved, and the schedule for FY17 budget planning were reviewed.

Director Cox showed proposed routes extending the Praeri Rail Trail through Zearing to Dakins Lake; Shive-Hattery is developing cost opinions for three different options.

Cox reported that an initial meeting for collective bargaining negotiations was held, the City of Ames is preparing a final plat for the ISU Research Park project, and that Central Iowa Water Association has not received a signed agreement from Country Living Court for the Hickory Grove Park sewer project.

January 5, 2016

The board approved a resolution of support for a Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance (CIRTPA) grant application for extending the Praeri Rail Trail to Dakins Lake. The board also voted to award a quote for oxbow and wetland restoration at Jennett Heritage Area to Dan Moody Excavating for \$5,400.

January 11, 2016

Chair Tedesco administered the oath of office to Jim Pease, who was re-appointed for a five-year term. Officers for 2016 were elected: Craig Meyers, chair; Nancy Franz, vice-chair; and Allen Weber, secretary.

The board approved a volunteer referral agreement with the Volunteer Center of Story County, a temporary construction easement and permanent electric line and facilities agreement with Michelangelo Wind 1, and Skunk River Water Trail designation limits and experience classifications.

The board reviewed a draft of the Skunk River Water Trail sponsor agreement and received an update on the IRVM program from Roadside Biologist Joe Kooiker.

Director Cox gave updates on the ISU Research Park project.

February 9, 2016

The board approved first readings of SCCB By-laws and Rules and Regulations, the FY15 annual report, and a memorandum of understanding with Central Iowa RSVP and Central Iowa RSVP North for the placement and management of volunteers.

Laura Bell, Youth and Shelter Services, was present to propose that SCC adopt a tobacco-free/nicotine-free policy to include all Conservation buildings, grounds, vehicles, and events which would extend to visitors as well as employees.

County Attorney Stephen Holmes gave an update on the Army Corps of Engineers land north of Ames, and Park Ranger Ryan Wiemold gave a presentation on work accomplished by the Skunk River Unit in 2015.

Director Cox reported on acquisition of the Baldus property, notification of a CIRTPA grant award for the Praeri Rail Trail extension, and progress on the ISU Research Park agreement.

March 14, 2016

The board approved a goat grazing lease agreement with Finch Livestock Exchange, a goat grazing lease agreement with Goats on the Go, a concession contract with Lured in Bait and Tackle for firewood and bait sales at Hickory Grove and Dakins Lake, 2016 campground attendant contracts for Kevin and Davette Anderson (Hickory Grove Park), Jeff Wells (Dakins Lake), and Rod and Valerie Schmitt (Dakins Lake), first reading of SCCB Law Enforcement Manual, second reading of SCCB By-Laws, and a second reading of SCCB Rules and Regulations.

The board also reviewed and recommended approval of Chapter 4 and Appendix D of the Story County C2C Plan; approved a collective bargaining agreement between Story County, Iowa,



March 2016 – Mike Meetz and Mike Cox pose with Meetz's IAN/ICEC 2015 Outstanding Volunteer Award.

Conservation Board and Public, Professional & Maintenance Employees Local 2003 (Conservation Unit), July 1, 2016-June 30, 2018; and recommended approval of Amendment #7 to the Professional Services Agreement with Shive-Hattery for Dakins Lake Expansion to the Story County Board of Supervisors.

Environmental Education Coordinator Jerry Keys presented the Iowa Association of Naturalists volunteer award to Mike Meetz, noting Meetz's numerous and varied contributions to conservation organizations in Story County.

Director Cox gave updates on the ISU Research Park project, sewer system improvements at Hickory Grove Park, and the Dakota Access Pipeline easement crossing the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail.

April 6, 2016

The board approved a service enterprise memorandum of understanding with the Volunteer Center of Story County, placement of a memorial tree and benches at Dakins Lake in memory of Bernadine Dakins Schaefer and Manly and Bethany Dakins, a 2016 campground attendant contract for Tom Foley (Hickory Grove), and a contract with Dan Moody Excavating for repairs on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail.

April 11, 2016

Outreach Coordinator Erica Eaves gave a presentation on volunteer activities and outreach efforts over the past year.

The board approved the SCCB Law Enforcement Manual (second reading), the SCC Classification and Compensation Policy, and the SCC Performance Management Policy. The board also approved a contract between the IDNR and SCCB establishing SCC a sponsor of the Skunk River Water Trail and recommended approval of a contract between FEH Design and Story County for architectural and engineering fees for the Hickory Grove Park shower building/storm shelter to the Story County Board of Supervisors.

In updates, Cox announced that Special Projects Ranger Carol Williams will be retiring May 26 and that the new position for the ISU Research Park will be filled after the beginning of the FY17 fiscal year, a pre-bid proposal meeting will be held for firms interested in the design work

for the ISU Research Park, and conversations with the Colo City Council regarding the Hickory Grove sewer project are ongoing,

May 9, 2016

The board approved employment of seasonal staff, a Resource Enhancement and Protection Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP) grant application for school pollinator gardens, a contract with Wildland Ecological Services for Sensitive Areas Inventory, Phase I, and the purchase of three body cameras and one Toughbooks laptop computer for law enforcement staff. Resolutions were passed recognizing Carol Williams' service to Story County upon her retirement and supporting a wildlife habitat stamp grant application to assist in purchasing the Ronald "Dick" Jordan Family Wildlife Area.

Natural Resource Specialist Amy Yoakum gave a presentation highlighting natural resource work accomplished in the past year as well as upcoming projects.

Director Cox reported that proposals have been solicited for design and engineering work at the ISU Research Park, and the application deadline for the parks superintendent position is May 22. The board discussed honoring Supervisor Paul Toot, who passed away earlier this month, with a memorial at one of Story County's parks.

June 13, 2016

The board approved employment of Ryan Wiemold as parks superintendent effective June 27, 2016, salaries for SCC employees for FY17, \$.25/hour salary adjustments for four seasonal staff who completed pesticide applicator certification testing, and a contract with Tom Foley to serve as campground attendant at Hickory Grove Park for the dates of July 11 – October 30, 2016. The board also selected Shive-Hattery, Inc. as the engineer for the ISU Research Park design.

Story County Attorney Stephen Holmes was present to discuss SCC's interest regarding the proposed Dakota Access easement under the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. The board set a meeting for June 27 to review the proposed easement and make recommendations to the board of supervisors.

In updates, Director Cox announced that the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) group will be arriving on July 22 to assist SCC for six weeks.

June 27, 2016

The board held a special meeting to consider an easement with Dakota Access for the construction of a pipeline crossing the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail.

After comments from the public, representatives from Dakota Access, and the county attorney, the board voted to approve Resolution 2016-05 recommending approval of an easement with Dakota Access Pipeline (with amended language on umbrella liability) to the Story County Board of Supervisors.