

Story County Conservation Board
Monday, April 9, 2012
Story County Conservation Center, McFarland Park

1. Chair J. Pease called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.
2. **ROLL CALL**

MEMBERS	STAFF	GUESTS
Jim Pease – present	Mike Cox	Mike Meetz
Ted Tedesco – absent	Jolene Van Waus	Linda Meetz
Joyce Hornstein – present	Carol Williams	
Sandy Opstvedt – present 7:05		
Allen Weber – present		
Wayne Clinton – absent		
3. **INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

Guests Mike and Linda Meetz, interested Nevada citizens, and Special Projects Ranger Carol Williams were welcomed to the meeting.
4. **REVIEW AGENDA AND HANDOUTS**

There were no comments on agenda items or handouts.
5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOTION by A. Weber, SECOND by J. Hornstein, to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2012 meeting. MCU.
6. **APPROVAL OF CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS**

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by S. Opstvedt, to approve all claims and receipts as submitted. MCU.
7. **FINANCIAL REPORTS AND UPDATES**

Director Cox said budget revenue and expenditures are pretty much on target. The most recent distribution from the Gladys Leui Estate has brought that revenue up to the level expected earlier in the year.
8. **SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS**

Summer is coming rapidly, and several special programs will be occurring, including conservation center hours on Sunday afternoons, volunteer open house on April 18, spring fishing tournament on April 28, and the Partners spring festival on May 6. May 1 will be Naturalist Linda Zaletel's last O.W.L.S. event before she retires at the end of May.
9. **COMMUNICATIONS**

Director Cox was pleased that Story County Conservation received some good press coverage from the recent eagle release at McFarland Park. Approximately 400 people were attendance and were exposed to the park. Several organizations played a part in this successful event.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Meetz remarked that he and Linda have enjoyed volunteering for birding programs for 3rd and 4th graders and will host marsh tours during nature camps. Meetz said SCC staff members Dustin Eighmy and Beau Hoppe helped at the Izaak Walton League's recent hunter education class. The Ikes would welcome their help and skills for future classes.

11. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO HIGH TRESTLE TRAIL 28E AGREEMENT

Special Projects Ranger Williams clarified that the amendment to the original agreement provides for an endowment to receive and hold funds from the alliance partners. SCC's contribution would be \$500/year for the next 4-5 years. The agreement does not mandate the contribution, and Williams said that funds could come from *Partners* or REAP. She added that money from grants and fundraising will be used to finish parts of the project right away, and remaining funds will be saved. Pease said he was pleased that SCC was asked to be a partner even though Story County does not own or manage any of the property.

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by A. Weber, to approve the amendment to the High Trestle Trail 28E Agreement. MCU.

12. APPROVE GRAZING AGREEMENT WITH FINCH LIVESTOCK EXCHANGE FOR PRESCRIBED GOAT GRAZING AT ROBISON WILDLIFE ACRES

Cox explained that the agreement is similar to last year's pilot program in an attempt to help control woody vegetation and allow restoration of savannah at Robison Wildlife Acres. SCC staff has been happy working with the Finches, and he recommended continuing the management technique this year to target re-growth. Expenses have been absorbed by grant funds and donations.

MOTION by A. Weber, SECOND by S. Opstvedt, to approve a grazing agreement with Finch Livestock Exchange at Robison Wildlife Acres. MCU.

13. APPROVE 2012 CAMPGROUND ATTENDANT CONTRACT

Cox reported that Dale Sloan was selected from four applicants, and he is scheduled to start on April 27. Sloan has quite a bit of camping experience and working with boy scouts.

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by A. Weber, to approve the 2012 campground attendant contract with Dale Sloan. MCU.

14. APPROVE GRANT AGREEMENT WITH IOWA DNR FOR WILDLIFE DIVERSITY SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM—ROBISON WILDLIFE ACRES RESTORATION

This \$3,500 grant proposal was submitted by Naturalist Amy Yoakum. Cox commented that Yoakum has done a very good job organizing the restoration project and writing grants. This will be the third year for the grant, which will allow SCC to hire youth corps to conduct intensive multiflora rose and honeysuckle removal and burning.

The board said they would like to see before and after photos. Yoakum and Outreach Coordinator Tiffany Cornelius are collaborating on a PowerPoint presentation as well.

MOTION by A. Weber, SECOND by J. Hornstein, to approve the grant agreement with the Iowa DNR. MCU.

15. APPROVE FIRST READING OF REVISIONS TO SCC RULES AND REGULATIONS, REMOTE CAMPING AT ROBISON WILDLIFE ACRES

Cox stated that staff is ready to move ahead with a remote camping experience and have identified suitable areas at Robison Wildlife Acres. There are no concerns from adjoining landowners other than fire. Details need to be worked out regarding a registration or reservation process, but Cox hopes to have that information ready by the May board meeting. Potential sites along the Skunk River are also being considered. Pease noted that his approval of removal of remote camping at McFarland Park last year was contingent on staff finding another area for that type of camping.

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by A. Weber, to approve the first reading of revisions to SCC Rules and Regulations for remote camping at Robison Wildlife Acres. MCU.

16. SPECIAL PROJECTS AND PARTNERS UPDATES

Carol Williams gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting special projects and *Partners* program events since August of last year.

Partners - Membership numbers have remained fairly consistent—around 180. The advisory committee continues to meet every other month. Plans are being made for the spring festival. Williams thanked Naturalist Linda Zaletel for organizing the Partners photo contest and Mike Meetz for judging the photos. Williams added that Outreach Coordinator Tiffany Cornelius plans to handle the photo contest after Zaletel retires.

Jennett Heritage Area – This area was dedicated in September 2011 and has seen quite a bit of use. Staff is currently working on management plans.

Dakins Lake – Plans for the lake expansion are moving along quickly.

- A LAWCON grant was received to acquire the property. TIF funds came along unexpectedly.
- A \$6,000 grant was received from the Story County Community Foundation for playground equipment.
- Requests for proposals were sent to five engineering firms, with Shive-Hattery selected by the review committee. Public meetings will be held in Zearing for input on the project. Citizens are interested!
- Acquisition of the property from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has hit some snags. SCC cannot convert LAWCON-acquired land to non-recreational use, so the sale of any land for planned cemetery expansion must occur in the proper sequence. Although there are a lot of things to put into place, Williams said that the engineers can work on other parts of the projects while acquisition issues are addressed.

Skunk River Water Trail

- The DNR has hired Jean Eells and Mike Lanning to complete five kiosks to finish up that grant.
- A grant was received for water trail crew assistance for a portage at Hannum's Mill. There is an easement agreement with The Siemens Corp; the work is to be done the third week of June.
- Mimi Wagner has been hired to help with designating the Skunk River as a state water trail. Wagner will facilitate public meetings, complete assessments of each site, and

assist in ordering signs. Initial meetings will be held on April 17 and April 19 at the conservation center.

- Re-dedication of the Lekwa Access is June 3 at 1:30 p.m. This is also National Trails Day. Plans are to end the year with a dedication of the Shreck Access to celebrate designation of the Skunk River as an official water trail.

Indian Creek Greenbelt Trail - Williams wrote a CIRPTA grant requesting \$100,000 for bike lanes along County Club Road south of Nevada. Citizens stepped up to get this project done, and Williams represented Story County. The bike lanes should be built in 2013.

Hertz Family Woods and Nature Preserve – Dedication of this new area is scheduled for May 27 at 1:30. Quite a bit of field work needs to be done prior to the event.

Heart of Iowa Nature Trail – One item remains to be completed from the punch list—testing of bolts on the bridge fence—before the IDOT will sign off on the project. \$30,000 in retainage is owed to the contractor, and \$70,000 in retainage will be returned to SCC.

Gilbert Trail – A CIRPTA grant was received for this project, but one landowner has refused to sell property along the planned route. Another route to the school (bike lanes along 530th Avenue) is being considered with a request to CIRPTA to change the scope of the project to include those bike lanes.

Miscellaneous

- An update to the IACCB's Outdoor Adventure Guide was completed. Williams acknowledged administrative staff's help in this large undertaking.
- Williams assisted with the Trek the Trails event in February and is helping host the statewide bluebird conference this upcoming weekend.
- Three TEAM days are coming up, and Williams invited anyone who wants to experience some hard work to attend.
- Nice weather arrived early this year, so visitation to the parks is ahead of schedule. Law enforcement staff is down to two people (Williams and Eighmy) until a third ranger is hired. Williams was on duty the last two weekends but did not experience any law enforcement problems.

The Board thanked Williams for her presentation and for a good job with the tremendous amount of work on her plate!

17. GENERAL UPDATES

- Cox also thanked Special Projects Ranger Williams for her hard work in the past year. He noted that for several weeks, Williams was the only ranger, and she handled this duty well in addition to juggling several special projects. Cox remarked that staff vacancies have meant added work for staff, and that everyone has been doing an incredible job.
- Approval of the Dakins Lake expansion agreement with Shive-Hattery is on the board of supervisors agenda for approval tomorrow. Everyone is concerned about sticking to the timeline; the goal is to submit funding requests to the supervisors in September.
- Meetings have been held with the county attorney regarding his position on endowments. This has been a longstanding discussion, and Assistant County Owen will attend the May board meeting to discuss foundations and endowments.

- Damage from horses was reported on the HOINT between Maxwell and Cambridge. Upon inspection, significant damage was found. The trail was graded and repaired, and special signs were developed asking users to avoid using the trails when muddy. This request was posted on SCC's Facebook, and KCCI News did a story on the issue.
- Emily Herring was hired as a naturalist to replace retiring Naturalist Linda Zaletel. Herring will start on April 16 prior to Heather Hucka's maternity leave. Cox remarked that Herring has a lot of naturalist experience and will be a tremendous addition to SCC.
- Interviews for the natural resource specialist and park ranger positions are scheduled during the next two weeks. About 30 applications were received for each position.
- Staff is getting ready for upcoming dedication events at Hertz Woods and the Lekwa Access. Site work and signage is being completed, and the Hertz family is locating and moving rocks for engraving and for sitting stones for that area.
- The TEAM day on the Skunk River Greenbelt last weekend went very well with 14 people in attendance. The group was able to do work on the 4th try bridge, addressing approaches to the bridge where there was significant erosion damage.
- Cox invited board members to visit the new county website, and he acknowledged the tremendous efforts of Tiffany Cornelius and Office Assistant Sarah Erickson in transferring and updating the information from the old website. Eventually, registrations and on-line payments will be available through the website. Cox added that Cornelius is doing a remarkable job with SCC's Facebook page and is adding numerous friends.

18. IOWA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARDS UPDATE

Hornstein reminded board members to put the September 13-15 fall conference at Honey Creek Resort on their calendars. She also asked board members to think about items for an auction basket from Story County for this event.

19. OTHER

Pease announced a new Master Rivers Steward program being offered this summer. Similar to the Master Gardener and Master Conservationist programs, the pilot program in central Iowa will train volunteers in various topics including river navigation, policy issues, and restoration techniques. Meetings will be held at various locations in the state, and the class for 25 participants is already full with a waiting list.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by A. Weber, SECOND by J. Hornstein, to adjourn the meeting. Chair Pease adjourned the meeting at 8:47 p.m.

Recording Secretary

Story County Conservation Board