

Story County Conservation Board
Monday, November 8, 2010
Story County Conservation Center, McFarland Park

1. Chair W. Clinton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. **ROLL CALL**

MEMBERS	STAFF	GUESTS
Wayne Clinton – present	Steve Lekwa	Mike & Linda Meetz
Erin Wilgenbusch – present	Amber Tiarks	Rose Danaher
Ted Tedesco – absent	Joe Kooiker	Leah Houg
Joyce Hornstein – present		Austen Sickora
Don Toms – present		
3. **INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

Guests Linda and Mike Meetz, Rose Danaher, Leah Houg, and Austen Sickora introduced themselves.
4. **REVIEW OF AGENDA AND HANDOUTS**

Board members reviewed the packet and supplemental packet; there were no additions.
5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOTION by D. Toms, SECOND by J. Hornstein, to approve the minutes of the October 11, 2010 meeting. MCU.
6. **APPROVAL OF CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS**

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by D. Toms, to approve all claims and receipts as submitted. MCU.

Chair Clinton verified that the total cost for Ryan Wiemold to attend the law enforcement academy was around \$5,000. Lekwa noted that the brush spraying claim is for the fall 2010 contract. The company was not able to complete four scheduled townships due to weather delays and then ultimately being too late in the weed season.
7. **FINANCIAL REPORTS AND UPDATES**

Clinton corrected the REAP summary on page N-47. Story County has the 9th largest population with 87,214 (the REAP report stated 79,991); and the taxes per capita rank 93rd with \$229.21. Story County's levy rate is at 5.82 percent, which ranks 74th. The REAP figures were based on 98 counties rather than 99. Story County's total revenue ranked 9th with \$33,908,138.00; and expenditures were \$40,347,932.00.
8. **SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS**

Clinton reviewed the upcoming events and noted December's early board meeting.
9. **COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no additional communications.
10. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chair Clinton asked the guests to share more about themselves. Guest Austen Sickora

observed the proceedings as part of an Iowa State University (ISU) humanities class. He is from Colfax and is pursuing a degree in Liberal Studies. Leah Houg, a junior from Minnesota, is majoring in Environmental Studies and Non-Profit Management and is observing for the same ISU class. Rose Danaher is the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Coordinator for Hickory Grove and has worked as a seasonal employee for Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) for four years.

Concerned Nevada citizen Mike Meetz informed the board that the Olav Smedal selection committee will soon chose an award recipient. Meetz asked the board for an update on the Cooper's Prairie Marsh expansion. Lekwa said Bob Cooper tried for several years to get the land enrolled in wetland reserve but died before it came to fruition. Pheasants Forever Regional Biologist Jared Wiklund is working with the Pheasants Forever Foundation and Story County Pheasants Forever to pay off the land for donation to SCC once the restoration is done. The land acquisition will bring Cooper's Prairie Marsh to 40 acres.

11. APPROVE FISH HABITAT GRANT PROPOSAL

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by D. Toms, to approve the Fish Habitat Grant Proposal.

Ayes: W. Clinton, E. Wilgenbusch, J. Hornstein, D. Toms

Nayes: None

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Lekwa said the Fish Habitat Grant requires a 10 percent match. SCC will use REAP funds if the grant is successful. The resolution of support is needed to process the application.

12. CONSIDERATION OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Lekwa explained that this process is no different than other conservation easements on file. The property is almost 106 acres including a deep lake and rolling hills. It is located halfway between Nevada and Maxwell on the west side of East Indian Creek, roughly one mile east of the Jennett Heritage Area. Paul and Marsha Readhead have done major habitat restoration converting crop fields to native grass lands and would like to see it protected by a conservation easement. SCC needs to advise the Readheads if the board will accept another conservation easement. Lekwa said the conservation easement is the best of both worlds, because it keeps the property on the tax rolls but ensures it will maintain wildlife and habitat values into the future. The Readheads are also willing to provide an endowment into the trust fund for monitoring enforcement of the easement.

Clinton questioned why the board does not formally accept the easement with a motion. Lekwa explained that it will be recorded once the easement is given and it becomes almost like a deed. SCC would have ownership rights on certain development in the property even though some of it could be developed into homes. The Readheads recognize that by putting restrictive covenants on the property it may devalue it if they chose to sell, but they are willing to take a loss in exchange for knowing their habitat improvements will continue. A vote of support by the conservation board accepts the donation of a conservation easement as depicted in this document.

MOTION by D. Toms, SECOND by E. Wilgenbusch, to approve the conservation easement from Paul and Marsha Readhead, MARR LLC as listed on the plat. MCU.

13. **CONSIDER REVISED BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE FOR WINTER**

Tabled from October, a temporary 5:30 p.m. board meeting start time was discussed. Board members had concerns that an earlier time may limit public participation in the meetings and, after the trial period, would like to see a comparison of guests for those meetings compared to previous years. Wilgenbusch would prefer an earlier meeting not include food in the essence of time.

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by E. Wilgenbusch to change the time of SCCB meetings to 5:30 p.m. for January, February, and March 2011. MCU.

14. **INTEGRATED ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT REPORT**

Roadside Biologist Joe Kooiker reported that the department planted 40 acres on R-38, but the project is not done. Kooiker and seasonal staff had both combines running during seed harvest and held two public seed harvests. He is very appreciative that his part-time staff has remained to help him through these busy times. Staff burned four sites for 10 acres in 2009. In 2010, staff burned 11.5 acres at 10 sites, plus 47 other acres. In FY10, staff planted 54 roadside sites for 24 acres, compared to 46 sites for 45.5 acres in FY09.

Seed drills will be in high demand in the fall and spring for over 1,000 acres of CRP sites. The drills were rented to 20 landowners for 200 acres last year compared to the typical 1,000 acres.

Kooiker addressed complaints that the land around the IRVM base is not kept up. He explained that when it was the county home site, it was well groomed by several employees, and neighbors were used to that appearance. When the site was abandoned, a lower-level maintenance plan was created, and the site was sprayed and planted to prairie. Kooiker said that the look is different than brome grass, but the mindset of the neighbors hasn't changed. Staff keeps up the buildings, mows along the lane, and trims around the gates. Kooiker invited the board to tour the area and the shop building next spring.

Contract brush spraying is in its third year. After a trial year with another contractor, the contract was awarded back to the company from Algona. The plan was to conquer the brush in four townships. Due to the weather, the contractor only got \$17,000 worth of work done and didn't get to Palestine or Washington townships. Kooiker plans to keep the brush contractor at a cost of \$25,000-35,000 rather than hire full-time help in the upcoming fiscal year. Brush maintenance is a full-time job during the busy summer season when staff is needed for other projects.

Kooiker said he and his staff are worn out from extended hours, and he would like to come back to give a Power Point presentation to the board after the first of the year. Clinton expressed appreciation for Kooiker and his staff for putting in the extra time to take advantage of the break in the weather.

15. **HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL PROGRESS**

Contractors will spend two days pouring asphalt on the steep grade areas. The safety fence for the bridges is partially done. Some dirt and shoulder work is still needed, but everything should be done by December 1. Staff is working to get signage up on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT) where damage has occurred because people have been on

the trail before it is ready.

16 DISCUSSION OF SUCCESSION TIMELINE

Clinton reported that the board of supervisors will soon decide the direction of the human resources position that will be vacant in December. Hornstein asked about the status of a new conservation board member to make sure they were caught up before the hiring process. Clinton advised that the board of supervisors has one more person to interview for the conservation board vacancy and would like to have an appointment by the end of December.

Dave Hansen had suggested a March application deadline for the conservation director to allow for transition time, but the board can modify that timeline as needed.

17 DISCUSSION OF FOCUS GROUPS

Wilgenbusch reviewed comments compiled by Meetz from groups including Audubon, Izaak Walton League, Boy Scouts, and trail volunteers. Miscellaneous comments included the need for more primitive tent-camping sites like they took away at Bear Creek, surfacing the HOINT, camp sites at Peterson Park, kiosks with up-to-date trail maps, boundary markers, the Touch-A-Life Trail, increased mowing on the Praeri Rail Trail, and improved hunting area signage. New comments centered around evening ranger patrol in areas like Soper's Mill and Robison Wildlife Acres, concerns with new construction not serving the public, and the purchase of staff vehicles under times of budget constraints. Lekwa reported that he and Ted Tedesco posed several questions to the Ames Anglers group but have not compiled a summary. Hornstein said she has comments from the past couple of weeks from the trails committee that she will submit.

Clinton asked if the board had enough comments to go on or if there were to be more focus groups. Wilgenbush will not have time to devote to the project due to an increase in her student load, so the board will need to decide the direction.

Lekwa commented that people are frustrated right now that FEMA work has not been completed and dollars won't be allocated until next year. Hornstein suggested sending out a notice in the form of articles, press releases, or Facebook that improvements will be made.

18. OTHER

Discussion was held on camping fees being placed in the conservation reserve fund and the impact on the tax asking budget. SCC is anticipating the conservation reserve request would be done each year as an ongoing resolution to support large projects.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Clinton adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Recording Secretary

Story County Conservation Board