

FY20 Annual Report

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020



“Designate the Skunk”

The Story County portion of the South Skunk River has been designated as a State Water Trail

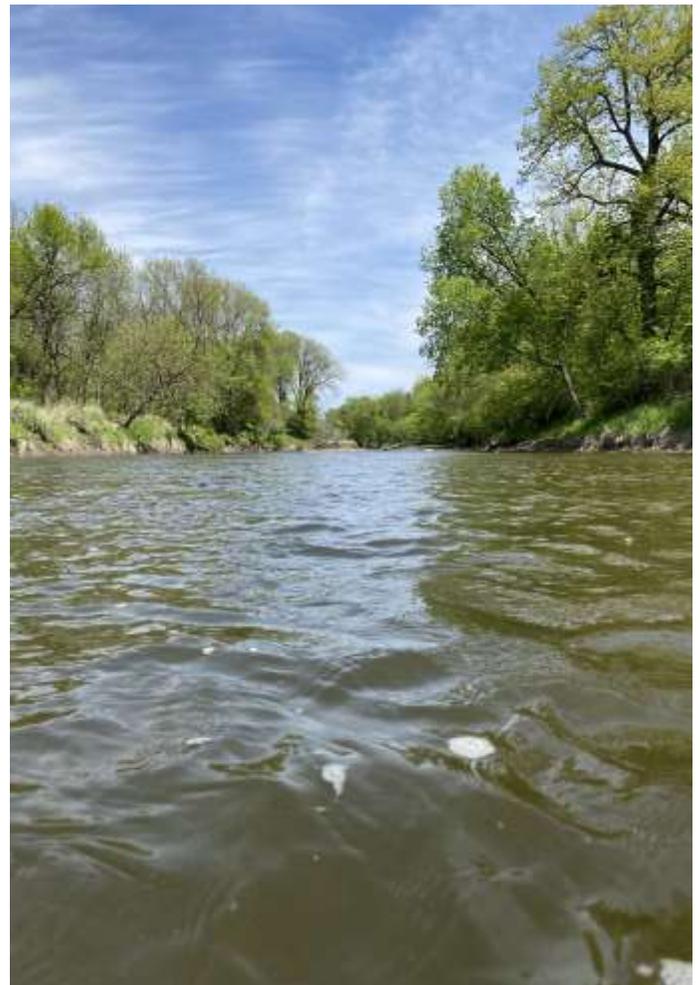
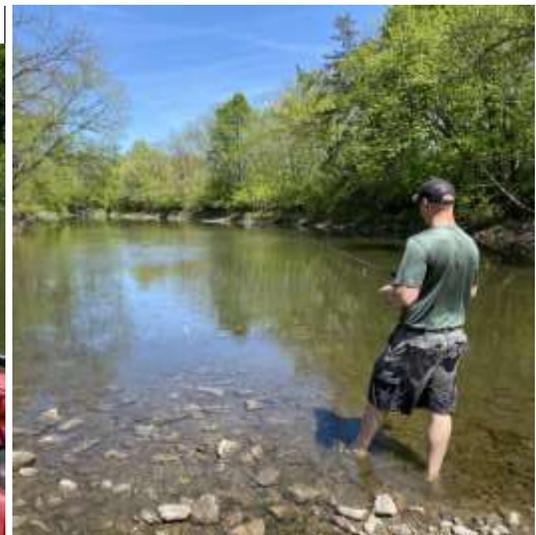


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Kayaks on the South Skunk River



Fishing on the South Skunk River

At A Glance



Connecting people with nature and improving natural resources – making Story County a great place to live, work, and recreate.

Education/Outreach

- Hundreds of programs for schools, the public and private groups each year
- Programs for tots to seniors
- In all Story County school districts
- Co-sponsored programs with other organizations
- Named **Best Environmental Education Program in Iowa** (in counties with more than three naturalists) by the Iowa Association of Naturalists and Iowa Conservation Education Coalition
- Active community engagement through a robust volunteer program
- *Prairie Horizons* newsletters distributed quarterly
- Strong social media engagement

Recreation/Parks

- 3,400+ acres under management
- 2,100+ acres public hunting
- 89 miles of trails including new Skunk River Water Trail
- Campgrounds, lakes, picnic areas, meeting spaces, playgrounds, fishing docks

Recently Completed Projects

- Hickory Grove Park new beach house and docks
- Oriole Ridge Lodge renovation
- West Peterson Park dock, fence, and parking lot improvements
- Replaced entrance signs at multiple parks
- Habitat restoration at multiple properties
- Common Ground Stories of the land recorded
- The South Skunk River was designated as a state water trail
- Dakins Lake ADA concrete trail paved from the parking lot to the picnic shelter
- Wicks, Osheim and Ryerson land acquisitions
- McFarland Park new dock and wayfinding signs
- Jennett Heritage Area new parking lot
- Advancement of our conservation heritage by requiring non-toxic ammunition

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM)

- Conservation-focused right of way and drainage ditch maintenance
- 63 miles of drainage ditch management
- Roadway park and prairie management
- 5,700 acres under management

Current Projects

- Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor-Phase #3 (trail connector)
- Praeri Rail Trail extension to Dakins Lake
- Hickory Grove Lake restoration
- Hickory Grove Lake trail expansion
- Sensitive Areas Inventory (county-wide)
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving-Phase #2
- Dakins Lake cabin design
- Hickory Grove Park road resurfacing
- McFarland Park watershed assessment
- McFarland Park entrance sign

Upcoming Projects

- Hannum's Mill Dam mitigation
- Hickory Grove Park sewer replacement
- US Army Corps of Engineers land acquisition
- Hosting the 2021 ICCS Conference
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Slater connection

Introduction

The mission of Story County Conservation is to connect people with nature and improve our natural resources – making Story County a great place to live, work, and recreate. There are numerous ways in which we try to accomplish this and all involve meeting people where they are to provide opportunities or outlets for engaging with nature. We know that time outdoors is important to our social, physical, and economic wellbeing. When we are engaged in nature, our communities are healthier, our water is cleaner, and our environment is more resilient.

Fiscal year 2020 was a year of significant achievements but ended with the COVID slowdown. This report outlines the achievements made. Although COVID slowed our lives, it brought unprecedented use to parks and challenged us to offer environmental education in new ways. It is our hope that this level of outdoor recreation will be continued in coming years and more so, that our communities recognize and embrace the vital role of time spent outside. Nature has a way of rejuvenating our bodies and our minds. In coming years, we hope to expand our opportunities for nature engagement across our communities and continue to make positive impacts on our environment and our lives.

If you are a current supporter, we thank you for helping to provide opportunities for people to engage with nature. If you are not a supporter, we encourage you to consider joining our network of supporters who are so critical to nature in Story County.



Michael Cox
Director, Story County Conservation



James Pease
Chair, Story County Conservation Board

Boards and Staff

Story County Board of Supervisors

Lauris Olson (2019-2020)
Linda Murken (2019-2020)
Lisa Heddens (2019-2020)

Story County Conservation Board

Dr. Nancy Franz (2019-2020)
Christine Laumer (2019-2020)
Craig Meyers (2019-2020)
Dr. Jim Pease (2019-2020)
Ted Tedesco (2019-2020)
Linda Murken, ex-officio (2019-2020)

Story County Conservation Staff

Administration

Michael Cox, Director
Marianne Harrelson, Financial Data Manager
Elizabeth Jackson, Administrative Assistant

Environmental Education

Rebekah Beall Warburton, Naturalist
Heather Hucka, Naturalist
Jerry Keys, Environmental Ed. Coordinator
Jessica Lancial, Naturalist
Erica Place, Outreach Coordinator
Elizabeth Waage, Naturalist

Field Operations

Brandon Clough, Trails/Natural Resource Technician (July 2019 to Feb. 2020), Natural Resources Specialist (Feb. 2020 to current)
Russ DeWall, Conservation Technician II
Luke Feilmeier, Park Ranger
Joe Hill, Conservation Technician
Beau Hoppe, Conservation Technician
Nicholas Keefer, Conservation Technician (July 2019 to May 2020)
Benjamin Marcus, Conservation Technician (July 2019 to Oct. 2019)
Dillon Schmidt, Conservation Technician (Dec. 2019 to current)
Derek Seward, Trails/Natural Resource Technician (May 2020 to current)
Patrick Shehan, Special Projects Ranger
Danny Simcox, Park Ranger
Ryan Wiemold, Parks Superintendent
Amy Yoakum, Natural Resource Specialist (July 2019 to Nov. 2019)

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Mgmt.

Tyler Kelley, Vegetation Mgmt. Specialist
Joe Kooiker, Vegetation Mgmt. Biologist

Seasonal Employees – 2019

Bryce Andresen, Park Ranger Aide
Kaleb Angell, Conservation Aide
Greg Bolhous, Conservation Aide
Ian Chapman, Conservation Aide
Tanner Christiansen, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Tracy Christiansen, Conservation Aide
Leslie Du, Conservation Aide
Emily Lemons, Conservation Aide
Jacob Puckett, Conservation Aide
Robyn Jackson, Naturalist
Kaylee Reynolds, Naturalist
Brennen Reysack, Conservation Aide
Devin See, Conservation Aide
Allison Stegmann, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide

Seasonal Employees – 2020

Jeremy Anderson, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Kaleb Angell, Conservation Aide
Dylan Childs, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Tanner Christiansen, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Nicholas Hadaway, Conservation Aide
Paige Henggeler, Outreach Assistant
Emily Lemons, Conservation Aide
Josimar Palacio, Conservation Aide
Michael Parker, Conservation Aide
Madeline Schill, Conservation Aide
Kevin Schlotfeldt, Conservation Aide
Devin See, Conservation Aide
Hunter Simmons, Conservation Aide
Jacob Smith, Conservation Aide
Sean Vellinga, Conservation Aide

Annual Highlights

Recreation Enhancements

- The Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor Phase 3 construction includes a 2.5-mile paved trail connector between the park at University Boulevard and the R-38 bike lanes. This trail extension, with many private and public partners, is anticipated to open in the fall of 2020.
- The Hickory Grove Lake restoration construction included lake features such as new boat ramps, a bridge to the island, improved fish habitat, and expanded angling opportunities. Restoration to construction zones was completed, and spoils from the lake were shaped and seeded on site at the park. The existing off-road limestone trail was expanded around the perimeter of lake.



New bridge to island at Hickory Grove Park

- The Hickory Grove beach house was constructed. This prefabricated building features four family style restrooms, a concession room with roll up window, storage room, and two mechanical rooms. A drinking fountain is mounted on the exterior of the building, and an outdoor rinse shower with drain is placed on the

east side of the building. The building is centrally located and overlooks the beach.



New beach house at Hickory Grove Park

- Phase 2 of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT) paving was designed and construction began. This section starts at 560th Avenue in Huxley and runs east three miles to the scenic Skunk River bridge on the east side of Cambridge. Story County Secondary Roads will hard surface 535th Avenue for paved continuity on the bike trail in the fall of 2020. Other HOINT projects included the installation of a livestock fence from 560th Avenue to Interstate 35 and gully stabilization west of 630th Avenue.
- West Peterson Park's parking lot was reconfigured and bollards were installed to improve vehicle speed and flow. A split rail fence was installed along the entrance roadway, and speed bumps were placed with signage to slow traffic. A new U-shaped floating dock was installed next to the boat ramp to enhance angling and boat launching.
- Dakins Lake had an ADA concrete trail paved from the parking lot to the shelter/restrooms.

- The Praeri Rail Trail (PRT) was expanded between Highway 65 and Main Street in Zearing. This one-mile stretch of the trail included old railroad right-of-way clearing, grading, and paving.



Praeri Rail Trail paving to Zearing

- Staff and an engineering firm worked on a mitigation plan for Hannum’s Mill Dam. This included gathering public input through surveys and meetings and developing mitigation design options. Work on this plan will continue into 2021.
- The Story County portion of the South Skunk River officially became a State Designated Water Trail in June. The effort to designate it as a State Water Trail began in the mid-2000s.



South Skunk River

- McFarland Park had wayfinding signage installed throughout the park. This includes trail use markers, color-coded trails with distances, trail mapping, trail map signage and brochures. The Conservation Corps of Iowa (CCI) built new trail steps. A new floating dock was also installed on the lake along the Touch A Life Trail.



McFarland Park wayfinding signage

- The Wicks Wildlife Area was attained. This 53-acre property has restored prairie, oxbows, and riverine vegetation and expands the greenbelt for continued protection of the Skunk River.
- As part of the countywide Continuity of Operations Plan, electrical switches were installed at county facilities and generators were purchased to help run and maintain facilities in the case of a long-term power outage.

Natural Resource Enhancements

- A watershed study was performed by staff and the ISU Water Quality Lab at McFarland Park to collect data and determine health concerns. This effort will contribute towards a lake restoration in upcoming years.
- Staff continued prairie seed collection with hand harvest events and combining local ecotype seed.
- Volunteers, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, tackled garlic mustard in many parks.
- Emerald Ash Borer treatments occurred on mature trees selected for preservation in high-use, high-visibility areas.
- Conservation Corps of Iowa (CCI) and staff continued restoration efforts at Hickory Grove Park, Christiansen Forest Preserve, Doolittle Prairie, and the Praeri Rail Trail.



CCI work at Christiansen Forest Preserve

- Botanical and Ecology Consulting was contracted for sensitive areas inventory. The work includes field surveys on over 5,000 privately owned acres.

- Staff performed Timber Stand Improvements (TSI), including oak release methods, at McFarland Park and Christiansen Forest Preserve to remove invasive and undesirable species and promote native tree growth.
- Trees and shrubs were planted at Hickory Grove Park and Sleepy Hollow Addition. The Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor (TELC) had a native landscape planted in front of the shelters by the Ames Town and Country Kiwanis.



Tree planting at Sleepy Hollow Addition



Kiwanis native plant landscape at TELC

- Staff implemented a GIS program to help track, map, and collect data on natural resources and project work.

- Staff managed dove sunflower plots at Skunk River Flats and Cambridge Pond, and a deer food plot at Anderson Prairie on the Skunk River Greenbelt.
- Staff managed vegetation in parks and natural areas to fight against invasive and undesired species while promoting Story County’s natural vegetation.
 - Prescribed fires at Doolittle Prairie, Jennett Heritage Area, Hickory Grove Park, Dakins Lake, and other properties.
 - Mechanical removal of undesired trees and shrubs at Robison Wildlife Acres, Hickory Grove Park, Christiansen Forest Preserve, McFarland Park, and other properties.
 - Chemical application at Roland Wildlife Area, Dakins Lake, Hickory Grove Park, Jennett Heritage Area, and other properties.
 - Herbaceous weed control at Doolittle Prairie, Robison Wildlife Acres, Dakins Lake, and other properties.
 - Goat Grazing at Robison Wildlife Acres, Hickory Grove Park, McFarland Park, and Christiansen Forest Preserve.



Prairie burn

- Prairie restoration continued at Jennett Wildlife Area, Wicks Wildlife Area, Ronald “Dick” Jordan Family Wildlife Area, Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor, Hickory Grove Park, Dakins Lake, and Sleepy Hollow Addition.
- Staff was recognized with an award at the Iowa County Conservation System (ICCS) Conference from the Isaak Walton League Wildlife Habitat Improvement Award for 2019.



2019 ICCS Conference

Natural Resources Statistics for 2020:

- Planted 1,115 lbs. of prairie seed on 67 acres
- Planted 66 trees and shrubs at Hickory Grove Park and Sleepy Hollow Addition
- Conducted 240 acres of prescribed fires
- Acquired 144 acres of conservation areas
- Harvested 116 lbs. of combine run and 20 lbs. of hand harvest of prairie seed

Environmental Education

- Story County Conservation conducted 700 education and outreach programs resulting in over 18,000 contacts through 482 indoor presentations, 202 outdoor experiences, three service learning opportunities and 13 co-sponsored events. Despite the decrease in programs because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is five more co-sponsored events than last year.



Evening prairie walk co-sponsored event

- Environmental education efforts changed in March from face-to-face programming to virtual and self-led activities. Self-led hikes included treasure hunts, word scramble hikes, and story book walks. Positive comments via email and social media were received. The actual number of people who participated in these activities is unknown. A bi-weekly “what’s blooming in the prairie” was emailed to 20 people who signed up via mycountyparks.com. Several program videos were created and shared through social media.
- Two staff served as board members of the National Association of Interpretation Heartland Region.
- With the closing of the Conservation Center due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff created and installed new interpretive displays in the center.

- Chronolog sites were set up at Hickory Grove Park, McFarland Park, and the Tedesco Environmental Learning corridor on May 15. This citizen science project crowdsources time lapse photos to tell stories about the environment. Over 70 photos were submitted by park users in the first month and a half.



Chronolog site at McFarland Park

- Staff held 12 Common Ground: Stories of the Land recording sessions and submitted 22 recordings. This project of the Iowa Association of Naturalists focused on concrete experiences and memories that help participants explain their love for and connection to the natural world.

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM)

- Staff completed 101 work orders that comprised 73 seeding projects and various vegetation management issues. There were 56 roadside acres planted. Approximately 7,200 sq. ft. of erosion blanket and 5,000 linear ft. of sediment logs were installed to reduce erosion.
- Staff foliar sprayed 254 centerline miles of roadsides with herbicide to address invasive weed and brush concerns.
- Brush control was contract sprayed in Franklin, Grant, Washington, Nevada and New Albany townships. Several sight distance issues at driveways and intersections were addressed by staff.
- Brush re-sprouts were treated with aquatic labeled herbicides in four drainage districts, covering over nine miles of open ditches. Trees and brush were cut and piled on Grant #13. Contractors removed large trees along Hardin-Story #3 and Hardin-Story #1.
- Staff assisted 42 landowners/operators with implementation of conservation practices along open ditches and on private ground. There were 26 landowners that rented equipment to seed 222 acres of waterways and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Working with the local Pheasants Forever chapter, we distributed 925 lbs. of native grass and forb seed to landowners.
- There were 15 noxious weed complaints that were addressed by phone or in person and 4 certified letters were mailed.
- The prescribed fire program included one burn at the IRVM shop.

- There were two seed nurseries that produced 116 lbs. of usable prairie seed. Hand-harvested forbs from three volunteer events added to the diversity of the seed harvested by combines.



Hand and combine seed harvest

- There were four county residents (concerned about herbicide use) that signed up for the No Spray Program.
- Staff submitted a Living Roadway Trust Fund Grant to assist in the purchase of a new tandem axle trailer and a herbicide storage area for the new shop.
- Community involvement included presentations to the Story County Township Trustees and Conservation Corps of Iowa. Staff engaged with the local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Historical Society, and Pheasants Forever Chapter.
- Staff served on the Story County Safety Committee, and as President and Member at Large for the Association for Integrated Roadside Management Board. Staff served on Iowa Weed Commissioners' Association Board also as Member at Large and served on The Living Roadway Trust Fund Steering Committee.

IRVM FIELD OPERATIONS COMPARISON BY FISCAL YEAR			
	FY18	FY19	FY20
Work Orders Completed	79	31	101
Roadside Plantings (sites)	70	34	73
Roadside Plantings (acres)	44	23	56
Custom Plantings (sites)	0	3	1
Custom Plantings (acres)	0	4.5	5
Conservation/Other Plantings (sites)	2	0	0
Conservation/Other Plantings (acres)	40.6	0	0
Roadside Burns (sites)	3	5	0
Roadside Burns (acres)	8.72	10.4	0
Roadside Weeds Sprayed (miles)	202	225	219
Foliar Brush Sprayed (miles)	48	15	35
Equipment Rentals (landowners)	20	15	26
Equipment Rentals (acres)	311	91	222
Pounds of Seed Harvested	325	372	116
Volunteer Hours	257	118.25	88
Drainage District (amount billed)	\$12,512.30	\$17,168.39	\$30,771.32
Drainage District Revenue Received	\$11,214.80	\$18,252.75	\$24,758.84



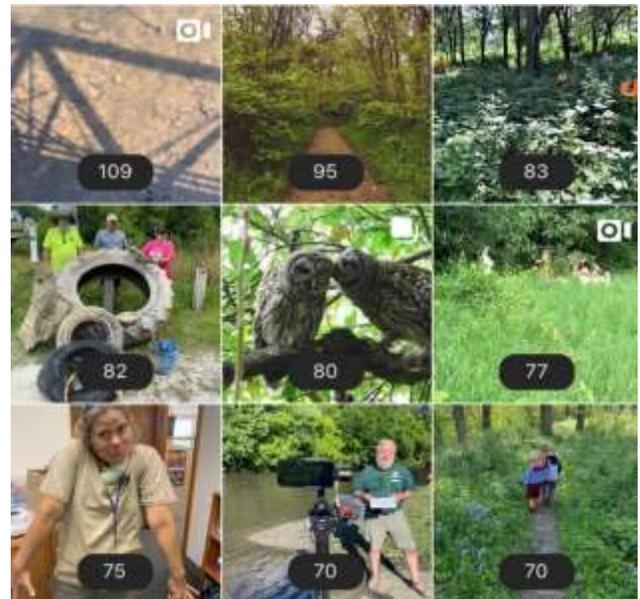
Prairie seed harvesting

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, and each edition reached over 3,000 individuals and families. An additional 535 copies were distributed to area libraries, city halls, and businesses. Event fliers, press releases, and paid advertisements with various local publications also helped spread news of our programs and projects. An article on the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor appeared in both the National Recreation and Parks Association and Iowa Parks and Recreation Association magazines.

The Outreach Assistant position was filled halfway through the fiscal year. The assistant focused on creating more consistent content across all social media platforms. COVID-19 presented opportunities to focus on video creation, and new video equipment allowed for experimentation with live feeds. Engaging and timely posts about where to get outside in the midst of the pandemic – specifically what trails were available – drew a lot of attention. By the end of FY20, there was substantial growth across all social media platforms and increased public awareness of the outdoor recreation opportunities available.

Another outreach development was the designation of Story County as a Bird Friendly County. This outreach and education campaign demonstrates that Story County recognizes that birds benefit the environment, economy, and quality of life. We will continue to identify ways to inspire our community as a whole to be more bird-friendly in our daily and professional lives.



Some of the most popular FY20 Instagram posts



A significant uptick in Facebook page likes parallels increased content

Volunteers

Volunteers are integral in attaining SCC's mission. Volunteer hours logged in FY20 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.

Spring is typically a time of increased volunteer engagement. COVID-19 presented some challenges and required remote orientation for most projects, including garlic mustard control. A video helped equip volunteers to be in the parks on an individual basis when the timing worked for them, rather than organizing group activities as in previous years. Over 60 hours of garlic mustard removal took place across 4 parks in FY20.

The 1,842.25 volunteer hours donated in FY20 roughly equate to 1 full-time staff. Using the Independent Sector volunteer service value of \$24.03 per hour, volunteers provided \$44,269 of service to SCC in FY20.



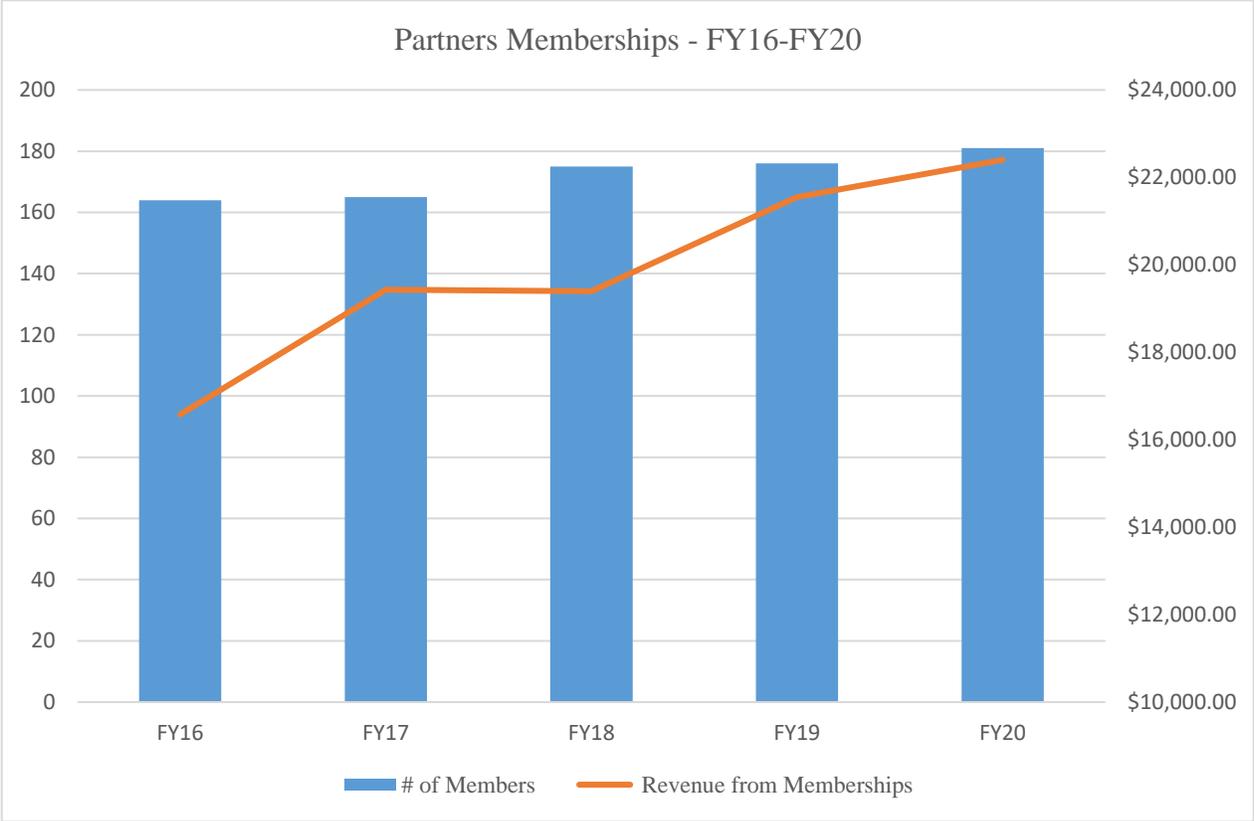
South Skunk River clean up



Scout Troop 101 built kestral nest boxes

Story County Conservation Partners

Story County Conservation *Partners* Membership levels range from Great Horned Owl at \$30/year to Red-tailed Hawk at \$1,000/year. *Partners* averaged 181 memberships during FY20 and raised a total of \$22,399.89 towards the construction of a cabin at Dakins Lake. Renewable Energy Group became the first *Partners* business member.



Story County Conservation Board Meeting Summaries

July 8, 2019

The board approved the following:

- Employment of a Conservation Technician
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Iowa for natural resource restoration projects in county owned areas
- Contract with Jensen Excavating, Inc. for tree removal in Hardin-Story #1 drainage district

Erica Place, Outreach Coordinator, presented her annual report that included a review of the past year's outreach and volunteer programs.

Director Cox updated the board on the Hickory Grove project, Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving, bid letting on the Hickory Grove Beach House, and developing a Bird Friendly Iowa program.

July 15, 2019

The board approved the following:

- Amendment to an agreement with Avec + Design Build for the design of a sustainable energy cabin at Dakins Lake.

Director Cox updated the board on the Dakins Lake cabin timeline.

August 12, 2019

The board approved the following:

- Pay correction for one staff member
- Updates to the Story County Conservation Employee Handbook
- Purchase of a gun safe for law enforcement use
- Agreement with ITC Midwest for construction of a multi-use recreational trail on a utility easement held by ITC
- Easement agreement with Iowa State University for construction of a multi-use recreational trail on the ISU AG 450 Farm
- Easement agreement with Iowa State University for construction of a multi-use recreational trail on the ISU AG 450 Farm Annex
- Support of a Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant application for the acquisition of the future Wicks Wildlife Area
- Easement with Swanson Trust for construction of a berm and deposition of spoils from the Hickory Grove Lake project

Kurt Friedrich, Scott Renaud, and Rich Johansen presented their proposed development plan on the Dotson Farms subdivision.

Danny Simcox, Park Ranger, presented his annual report including a review of the past year's staffing, law enforcement, what's next for Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor, West Peterson Park upgrades, and trail issues at East Peterson Park, Praeri Rail Trail, and the Skunk River Greenbelt.

Director Cox updated the board on the Hickory Grove Lake restoration and beach house projects, Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor easements, Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Phase 1 paving, and

the Hannum's Mill meeting. He is working with Prairie Rivers on a grant from the Story County Community Foundation for the water quality monitoring program.

September 10, 2019

The board approved the following:

- Contract with RW Excavating for purchase and hauling of class E revetment
- Memorial bench at East Peterson Park
- Resolution #2020-01 approving an agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation for Living Roadway Trust Fund grant to purchase a Norstar NSC-RS2000-GS-500 sprayer skid unit
- Resolution #2020-01 approving an agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation for Living Roadway Trust Fund grant to purchase an Isuzu NPR-HD cab over truck
- Resolution #2020-03 endorsing a grant application to the Iowa Federal Recreational Trails Program for hard surfacing/trail improvements on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail from Cambridge to County Highway S-14
- Final plans and specifications and form of contract for the Dakins Lake sustainable energy cabin

Luke Feilmeier, Park Ranger, presented his annual report including a review of the Hickory Grove Lake restoration project, beach house, and Jenette Heritage Area parking lot.

Director Cox updated the board on receiving a State Recreation Trail grant for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Phase 2, meeting with cities along the Praeri Rail Trail, and progress of the US Army Corps of Engineers land disposal.

October 14, 2019

CyBIZ Lab team members gave a presentation summarizing their findings regarding the TELC Phase 2 Visitors Spending Analysis.

The board approved the following:

- Employment of a Conservation Aide and Vegetation Management Aide
- Change order with RW Excavating, LLC for the Hickory Grove Lake restoration project for placement of fish habitat structure under existing Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fish Habitat grant
- Contract with Jensen Excavating for waterway stabilization for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail at 630th Avenue
- Agreement with the Trust for Public Land for a local funding feasibility study
- Purchase agreement with Rosemary Oshiem for 37 acres in Section 18 of Howard Township
- Easement agreement with James and Jeanne Roth for construction of a multi-use recreation trail
- Easement agreement with Burgason Enterprises, LLC for construction of a multi-use recreation trail
- Easement agreement with The Iowa State University Foundation construction of a multi-use recreation trail
- Easement agreement with The Iowa State University Foundation construction of a multi-use recreation trail
- Final plans and specifications and form of contract for the Dakins Lake sustainable energy cabin was tabled – indefinitely postponed

Jerry Keys, Environmental Education Coordinator, presented his annual report including school and public programs. They added some new programs and tried to do more co-sponsored events. We are purchasing a composter and are working on a compost program for field trips.

Director Cox updated the board on becoming a Bird Friendly Iowa county and progress on the Hannum's Mill Dam mitigation concepts. He informed the board that we were awarded the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant for the Wicks property.

November 4, 2019

The board approved the following:

- Professional services agreement with Snyder & Associates for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving phase 2 engineering
- Purchase of winter coats for the naturalist staff (unbudgeted)
- Campground rate increase at Hickory Grove and Dakins Lake from \$17 to \$20
- Story County Conservation FY21 Capital Improvement Project plan
- Review FY21 budget proposals first draft

Director Cox updated the board on rescheduling the Praeri Rail Trail meeting and legislative engagement.

December 9, 2019

Mike Meetz presented board chair, Craig Meyer, with the 2019 Olav Smedal Award.

The board approved the following:

- Employment of a Conservation Technician and Outreach Assistant
- Story County Conservation board meeting dates for 2020
- Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) agreement with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for the purchase of the Wicks Wildlife Area
- Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance grant agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation
- Cooperative agreement with Prairie Rivers of Iowa RC and D
- Contract with Hall's Backhoe and Trenching for hydrant replacement at Dakins Lake
- 2020 Legislative priorities
- FY21 Conservation and IRVM budget proposal

Director Cox updated the board on communicating with legislators and Hickory Grove Lake and beach house projects.

January 13, 2020

Chair Meyers administered the oath of office to Nancy Franz, who will serve through 2024. Officers elected for 2020 were Jim Pease, chair; Christine Laumer, vice-chair; and Nancy Franz, secretary.

The board approved the following:

- Sprayer system purchase
- Grant of limited easement with Iowa Regional Utilities Association
- Placement of memorial pergola for Roger Spaete at Hickory Grove Park
- IRMV shop addition

Joe Kooiker, Vegetation Management Biologist, and Tyler Kelley, Vegetation Management Specialist, presented their annual report on IRVM operations for the past year. Kooiker provided information on how they are going to track work orders on the new tablet. The work order system is the same system that secondary roads uses, and the data is being tracked county wide. He also gave statistics on planting,

erosion control, seed harvesting, and noxious weed/brush control. Kelly reported on work in the drainage districts and working with the Board of Supervisors regarding a contract spray program.

Director Cox updated the board on the Dakins Lake cabin and the Hickory Grove Park sewer projects, the US Army Corps of Engineers cultural work, and reviewed the agenda for the Praeri Rail Trail listening session.

February 10, 2020

The board approved the following:

- Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor Phase 3 final plans, specifications and form of contract, and authorization to release bids
- Employment of a Natural Resource Specialist
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Iowa for trail enhancement at McFarland Park
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Iowa for natural resource and water quality improvement project at Hickory Grove Park
- Purchase dock mounting systems for Hickory Grove Park from Iowa Prison Industries
- Website Linking Policy
- First reading of revisions to the Story County Conservation Rules and Regulations
- Memorial bench to be installed at McFarland Park
- Story County Conservation FY19 Annual Report
- Payment to the US Army Corps of Engineers to fund completion of the phase 1 cultural study
- Real estate installment contract with Jerald and Carol Ryerson for real property in Section 32 of Grant Township
- Firewood contract with Finco Tree/Wood Service, LLC
- State Recreational Trails grant agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation

Director Cox updated the board on the Dakins Lake cabin, the draft report on the feasibility study, and Hickory Grove sewer connection with the City of Colo.

March 9, 2020

The board approved the following:

- Pay adjustment for Environmental Education Coordinator
- Second reading of revisions to the Story County Conservation Rules and Regulations
- Body armor system replacement for park rangers
- Contract with Finch Livestock Exchange for management grazing in SCC areas
- Grant agreement with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for a Trees for Kids Grant for the Sleepy Hollow Addition
- Amendment to professional agreement with Shive-Hattery for the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor Phase 3 engineering services
- Contract with Howrey Construction for the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor Phase 3 construction
- Offer to buy real estate agreement with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for real property in Section 6 of Howard Township
- Purchase of seed for Wicks Wildlife Area from Diversity Farms
- Campground attendant contract for first half of season at Dakins Lake
- Campground attendant contract for first half of season at Hickory Grove Park

Director Cox updated the board on Hickory Grove Lake and the Dotson Farm subdivision project.

March 23, 2020

Linda Murken, Board of Supervisors Chair and Director Cox gave updates on COVID-19 for the county and conservation staff.

The board approved the following:

- Story County Conservation Board COVID-19 Continuity of Operations
- Temporary Employment Practices and Policies in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

March 30, 2020 – Meeting via conference call

The board approved the following:

- Temporary Employment Practices and Policies in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic (includes provision from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA))

Linda Murken and Director Cox updated the board on the county operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

April 13, 20210

Rita Conner with the City of Huxley presented information about the parking lot paving at the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail trailhead. They would like the board to consider a cost-share for this portion of their project.

Final presentation on the Dotson Farms subdivision. Approval of this project must come from the Conservation Board before Story County Planning and Development will approve the project. Kurt Friedrich and other members of his team were available for review and questions. Several members from Story County Planning and Development were also in attendance to give their input.

Ryan Wiemold, Parks Superintendent, submitted a written annual report.

The board approved the following:

- Employment of two Vegetation Management Aides and one Conservation Aide.
- Campground attendant contract for second half of season at Dakins Lake
- Campground attendant contract for the full season at Hickory Grove Park
- Social Media Policy

Director Cox updated the board on the COVID-19 operations and staff updates.

May 11, 2020

The board approved the following:

- Employment of a Park Ranger Aide, eight Conservation Aides, two Seasonal Naturalists, a Trails/Natural Resources Technician and a pay adjustment for the Parks Superintendent.
- Wellness Policy
- Face Coverings Policy in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- Naming the pergola at McFarland Park the George and Mary Engstrom pergola
- Cost share with the City of Huxley for improvements to the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail
- Professional services agreement with Wapsi Valley Archeology for completion of a phase 1 cultural study of the property to be acquired by Story County
- Contract with Brush and Weed Control Specialist for brush control

- Grant of Easements to the City of Huxley for improvements to the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail, Trail Ridge Park, and the realignment of 560th Ave.
- Grant of Easements to the City of Cambridge for access across county property for their water treatment plant
- Contract with Snyder & Associates for construction services for phase 2 of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail between Huxley and the South Skunk River bridge
- Construction contract award for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving project between Huxley and the South Skunk River bridge
- Acceptance of the Hannum's Mill Lowhead Dam Mitigation Phase 1 exploratory report
- Two 2020 LRFT grant application submissions
- Prairie Valley Subdivision management agreement, preliminary plat, and covenants.

Director Cox updated the board on the Hickory Grove Lake, sewer connection with the City of Colo, and Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor Phase 3.

May 14, 2020

The board approved the following:

- Campground Management Protocol; COVID-19

June 8, 2020

Diane Birt, President of the Outdoor Alliance of Story County (OAOSCO) updated the board on some projects and land acquisitions that they have partnered or supported the Story County Conservation Board on in the past. She asked if our board members could assist the OAOSC with increasing their memberships.

Pat Shehan, Special Projects Ranger, submitted a written report.

The board approved the following:

- Position change from Summer Naturalist to Conservation Aide
- Resolution #2020-4 approving FY21 salaries for Story County Conservation employees
- Step and longevity adjustments for FY21
- Replacement of drinking fountain for McFarland Park
- Purchase utility trailer from Thomas Bus Sales Inc.
- Change order # 1 with Howrey Construction for the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor Bid Package #3
- Professional services agreement with Shive-Hattery for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving between the High Trestle Trails and R-38 in Slater

Director Cox updated the board on the artwork and interactive display at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor, Praeri Rail Trail and the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Phase 2. The Environmental Education department has been creating numerous videos and finding creative ways to get people engaged. Research and discussions are still taking place on how to proceed with the fish removal at Hickory Grove. Parks are getting a lot of use due to the COVID-19 pandemic and people are adhering to the social distancing rules.

Grants Awarded

The following grants and agreements were awarded in FY20. Expenditures and reimbursements may occur in the year awarded or over several years.

FUNDING SOURCE	TITLE	AMOUNT AWARDED
Iowa Department of Natural Resources - Trees for Kids	Sleepy Hollow Addition Tree Planting	\$2,500
Iowa Department of Transportation - State Recreational Trails Grant	Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Huxley – South Skunk River Bridge – Phase II	\$530,000
Iowa Department of Natural Resources - Resource Enhancement and Protection Fund (REAP)	Wicks Wildlife Areas	\$76,424
Iowa Department of Transportation - Living Roadway Trust Fund	Norstar NSC-RS2000-GS-500 Sprayer Skid Unit	\$15,000
Iowa Department of Transportation - Living Roadway Trust Fund	2020 Isuzu NPR-HD Cab Over Truck	\$5,903
Total Grants/Agreements – FY20		\$629,827

Additional Leadership Roles

Michael Cox – County Conservation Directors Association Vice President; Prairie Rivers of Iowa Vice President

Heather Hucka – National Association for Interpretation Heartland Region Deputy Director

Tyler Kelley – Association for Integrated Roadside Management Board Member at Large; Iowa Weed Commissioners Association Board Member at Large

Joseph Kooiker – Association for Integrated Roadside Management Board Vice president; Living Roadway Trust Fund Steering Committee

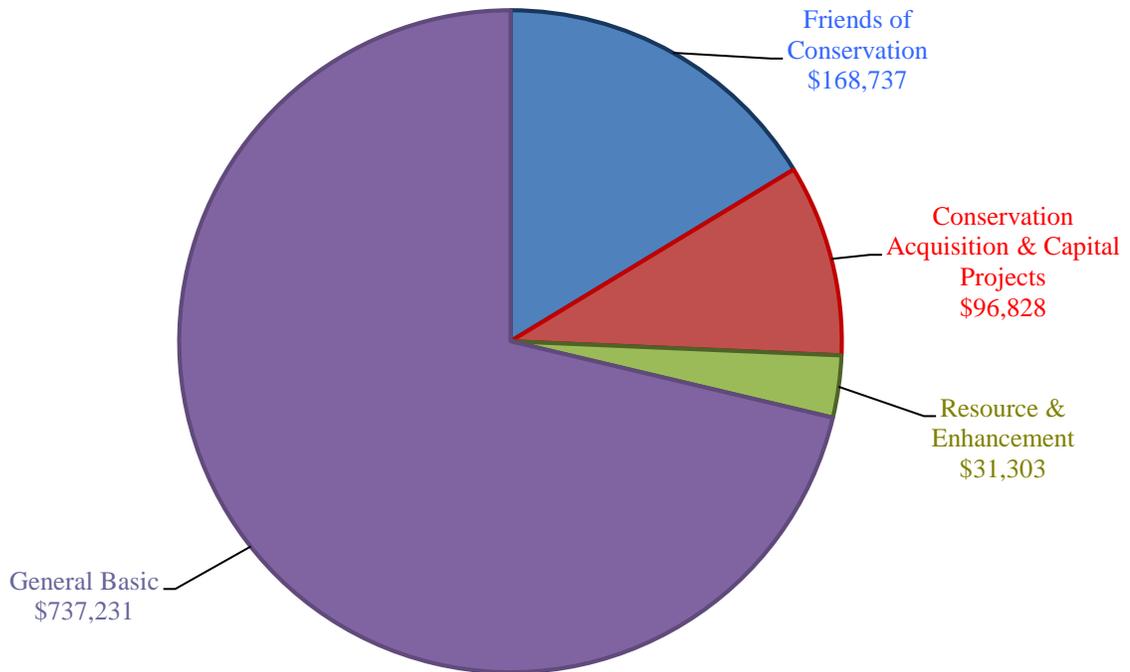
Patrick Shehan – County Conservation Peace Officers Association Board Member; District 1 Fish Habitat Stamp Grant Committee Chairperson

Elizabeth Waage – National Association for Interpretation Heartland Region Secretary

Ryan Wiemold – County Conservation Peace Officers Association Board Member

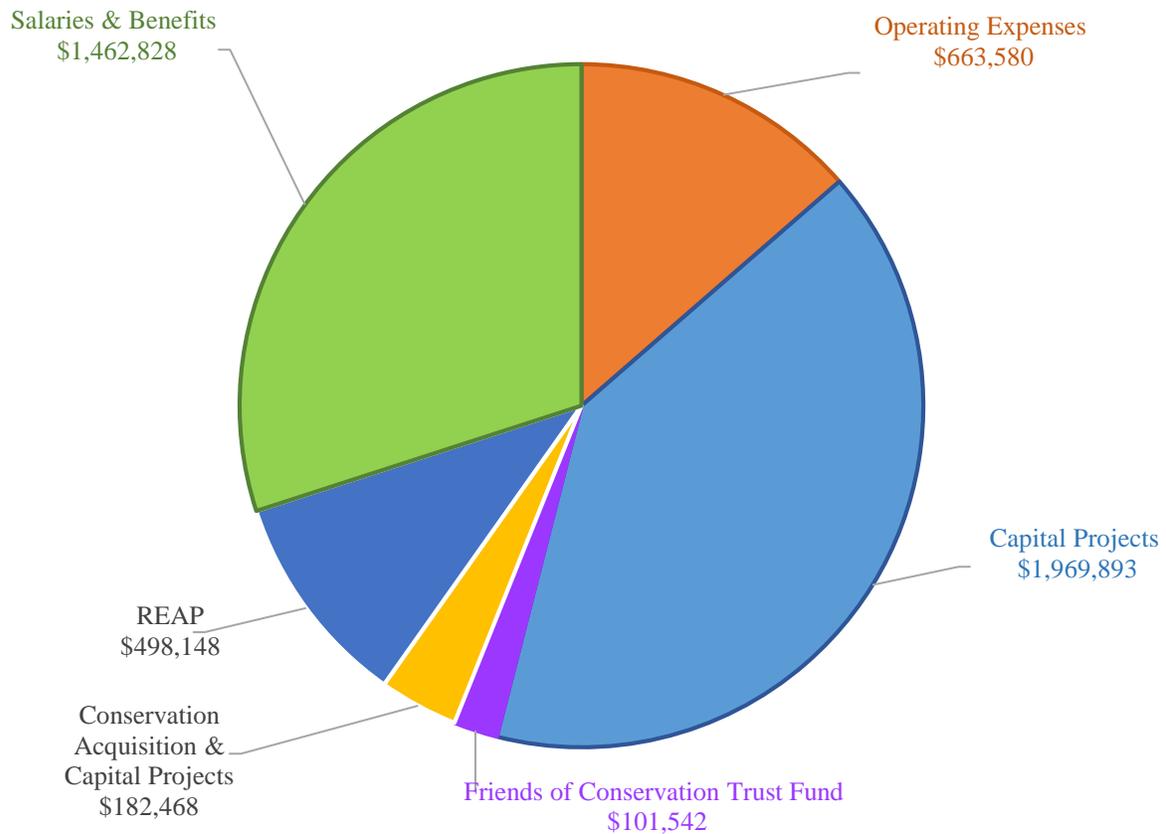
Financial Reports

CONSERVATION REVENUE - FY20 = \$1,034,099



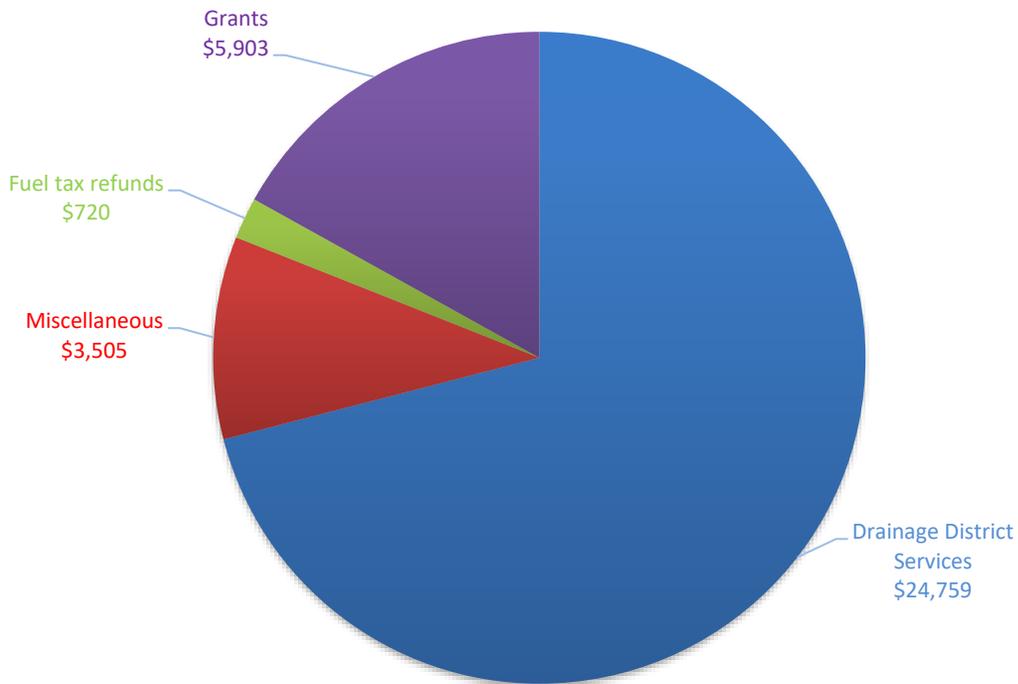
- General Basic – fees, building and equipment rentals, miscellaneous (\$35,839); FEMA (\$139,609); state grants and payments (\$561,783).
- Friends of Conservation Trust Fund – donations (\$136,075); Partners memberships (\$22,400); interest earned (\$10,262).
- Conservation Acquisition & Capital Projects – camping fees (\$98,828).
- REAP – annual per county and per capita distributions from the state (\$28,601); interest earned (\$2,702).

CONSERVATION EXPENDITURES - FY20 = \$4,878,459



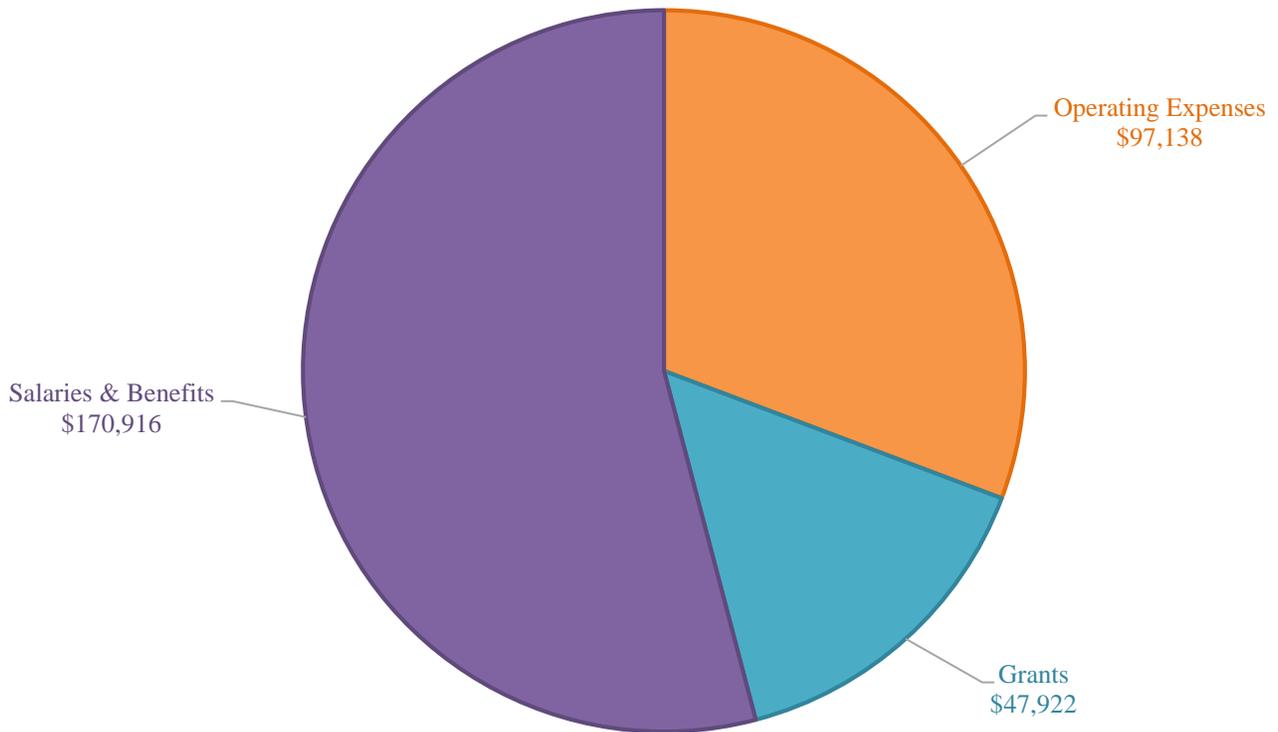
- Salaries & Benefits – 22 full-time and 11 seasonal staff.
- Operating Expenses – shop, office, programming, and recreational supplies; vehicle, building and grounds maintenance; utilities; education and training; new equipment.
- Capital Projects – Oshiem, Ryerson and Wicks land acquisitions (\$111,868); replace windows at 2809 S Riverside (\$10,676); purchase generators and install transfer switch at the conservation center, all residences and both shops (\$16,074); engineering and construction of Praeri Rail Trail extension (\$153,196); construction and installation of new beach house at Hickory Grove Park (\$274,796); new entrance sign at McFarland Park (\$155); planning and design of Dakins Lake cabin (\$22,631); Hickory Grove Lake restoration (\$581,458); breeding bird survey at Jennett (\$370); Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving (\$697,237); fish habitats at Hickory Grove Park (\$101,432).
- Friends of Conservation Trust Fund – land acquisition and appraisals (\$3,100); miscellaneous expenditures from donations and memorials (\$23,731); replace three docks at Hickory Grove Park (\$27,587); dock at McFarland Park (\$500); prairie seed for Hickory Grove Park (\$3,000); sand for beach at Hickory Grove Park (\$3,443); expanding trail system at Hickory Grove Park (\$8,431); Trust for Public Land study (\$11,750); new beach house at Hickory Grove Park (\$20,000).
- REAP – Wicks property purchase (\$76,424); TELC Phase 2 development grant (\$421,724).
- Conservation Acquisition & Capital Projects – Hickory Grove Lake Restoration (\$177,165); refunds given due to COVID-19 (\$5,303).

IRVM REVENUE FY20 = \$34,886



- Grants - reimbursement for Living Roadway Trust Fund.
- Drainage District Services – fees collected for brush control in the county’s drainage districts.
- Miscellaneous – fees for equipment rentals (\$2,629); custom planting and mowing (\$816); other (\$60).
- Fuel tax refund (\$720).

IRVM EXPENSES FY20 = \$315,976



- Salaries & Benefits – 2 full-time and 2 seasonal staff.
- Operating Expenses – shop and miscellaneous supplies; vehicle, building, roadsides, and drainage district maintenance; utilities; contract services; education and training; new equipment.
- Grants – \$47,922 for new equipment purchased through Living Roadway Trust Fund agreements.

FACILITIES REVENUE AND USAGE - FY18-FY20

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Dakins Lake Main Campground Revenue	\$38,252	\$33,603	\$41,558
# camping nights	1,678	1,632	1,125
# people	5,183	3,840	2,144
Dakins Lake Primitive Campground Revenue	\$5,162	\$5,470	\$5,084
# camping nights	342	388	260
# people	1,162	908	554
Hickory Grove Breezy Bay Campground Revenue	\$108,359	\$53,821	\$48,229
# camping nights	5,967	3,660	1,536
# people	18,042	9,779	2,403
Hickory Grove Primitive Campground Revenue	\$4,387	\$4,052	\$1,731
# camping nights	364	301	121
# people	1,299	882	255
Miscellaneous Camping Revenue	\$502	\$699	\$226
# camping nights	18	34	26
# people	440	170	73
Total Camping Revenue	\$156,662	\$97,645	\$96,828
Total Camping Nights	8,369	6,015	3,068
Total Number of People	26,126	15,579	5,429
Multipurpose Room Revenue	\$5,160	\$3,945	\$2,080
# paid rentals	19	14	5
# rentals with fee waived	50	51	12
Dakins Shelter Revenue	\$300	\$691	(\$58)
# reservations	13	12	9
Oriole Ridge Revenue	\$1,817	\$450	\$650
# reservations	65	6	5
Snow Bunting Revenue	\$710	\$546	\$0
# reservations	25	9	0
Total Lodge Revenue	\$2,827	\$1,687	\$592
Firewood Revenue	\$1,160	\$1,210	\$827
Special Events Permits Revenue	\$450	\$225	\$150
# permits	13	3	2
Boat Rental Revenue	\$4,406	\$1,435	\$0
# rentals	881	216	0
Waterfront (Concessions) Revenue	\$2,574	\$894	\$0

Story County Conservation Properties Map



