

# DEPPE PROPERTY

## CONCEPT PLAN

March 2022



**RDg...**  
PLANNING • DESIGN



# CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

---

PROCESS

---

FINDINGS

---

CONCEPT PLAN

---

OPINION OF PROBABLE COST

---

APPENDICES

---

# INTRODUCTION

The Deppe Project has been an incredible and collaborative opportunity to create meaning together. This mantra drives what we do at RDG Planning & Design, and after teaming up with the Story County Conservation Board, we now envision a true gem for Story County, Iowa. The Deppe family's generosity and conservation focus provided the perfect palette on which to imagine new and enhanced park experiences within the Story County park system. We hope this Concept Planning effort will provide the tools needed acquire the property, turn dreams into reality and support conservation education and recreation for generations to come.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2021, RDG Planning & Design, Inc. (RDG) was contracted by Story County Conservation (SCC) to develop a Concept plan for the Deppe Property. Bob Deppe and his family wanted to pursue permanent protection of their land for the future, so when he was ready to sell, Bob approached SCC and donated a significant portion of the land value to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). INHF will transfer ownership of the property to Story County Conservation once the fund to purchase it have been raised.

In the future, the Deppe Property will be part of the Story County Conservation parks system and the goals for the property support the holistic vision of the conservation board.

RDG worked with Story County Conservation staff, as well as the board, to understand the existing conditions of the Deppe Property. They toured the site, supported public engagement efforts both online and in person, and they connected a watershed analysis of the property. Keeping the initial goals in mind and considering all the supplementary data gathered through engagement, RDG developed a Concept Plan that can be used to raise funds to acquire the property. What follows are the details of that concept planning effort.

## Goals

1. Increase McFarland Park's buffer from agriculture, residential and commercial development
2. Increase Iowa native animal and plant habitat
3. Provide outdoor user destinations
4. Compliment McFarland Park's features



# PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

## Why are we doing this?

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

Story County Conservation manages 3,500 acres of parks and natural areas, including lakes, campgrounds, and trails, and an additional 5,500 acres of roadside habitat through the Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management program. As a state, Iowa ranks 47th out of 50 in percentage of public land making land acquisitions a key component to conservation and restoration of natural resources throughout the state.

“The true value of public lands should account for multiple, interacting values including environmental services, personal values associated with learning, the psychological benefits of visiting a site, the cultural and spiritual values associated with particular landscapes, and the social value of bringing families and friends together through recreation (2014 Assessing the value of public lands using public participation GIS and social landscape metrics- Applied Geography, Brown, Weber, de Bie).”

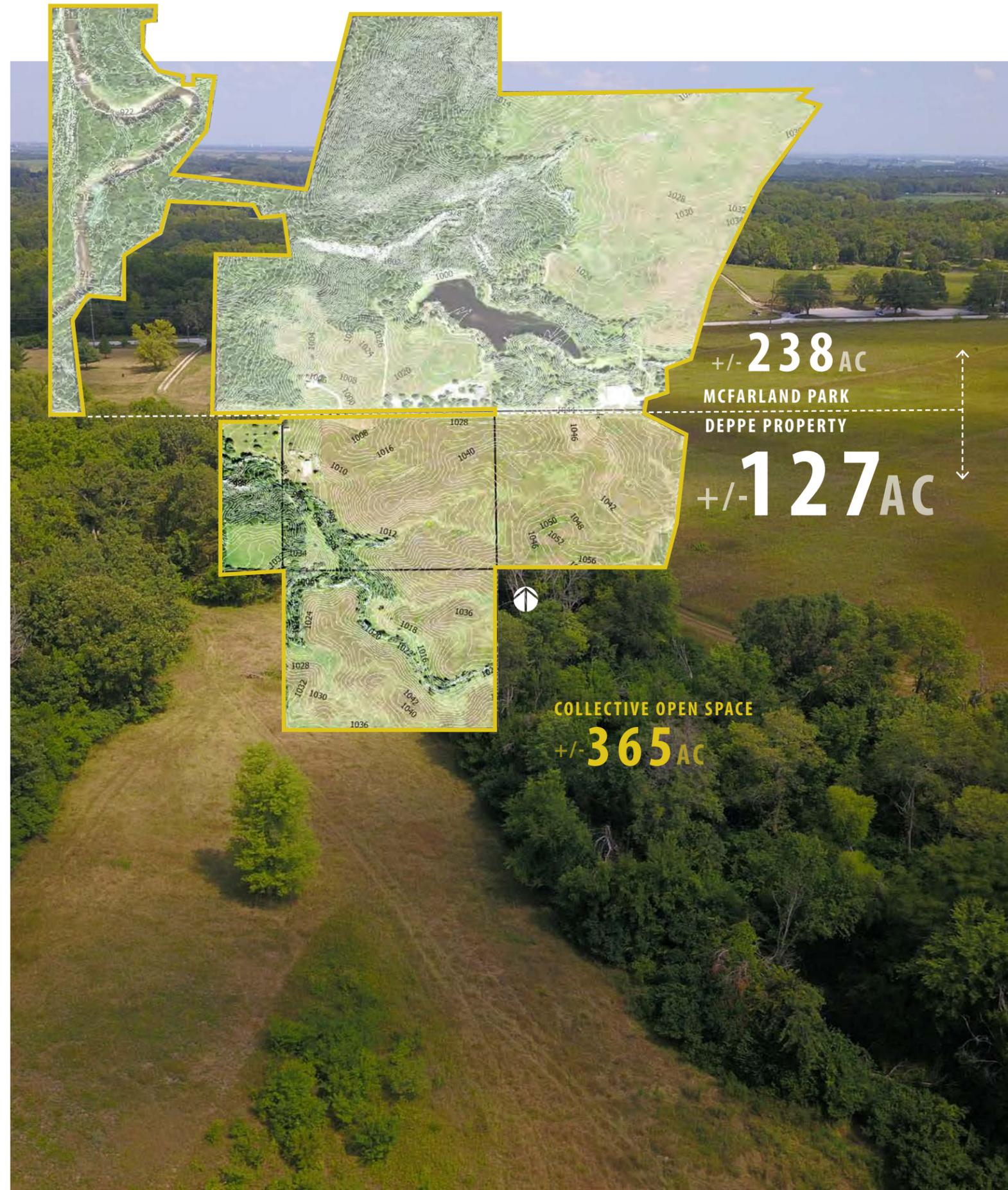
## Background

For nearly 50 years, the Deppe family have been stewards of land in Story County. Bob Deppe's agricultural roots run deep. Purchased in 1974, the 127-acre property has been a model of conservation alongside agriculture. The family implemented practices such as building terraces to prevent erosion during row cropping, and other efforts to conserve soil. A desire to maintain the land in its current state and preserve it for others led Deppe to pursue permanent protection of the property. He was aware that Story County Conservation (SCC) had long been interested in the land due to its proximity to McFarland Park, so he reached out to them when he was ready to sell. Deppe was determined to see the property protected in his lifetime and decided to donate a significant portion of value to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF), thus making the vision feasible. Once fundraising is complete, the land will transfer to SCC.

## Goals for the Property

The Story County Conservation Board met to discuss the goals for the property, taking into account how it should be developed and how it will relate to the broader Story County system of parks and properties. The Board reviewed property maps and discussed the project background. The Board discussed coordinating the plan development with other county plans and initiatives.

1. Increase McFarland Park's buffer from agriculture, residential and commercial development
2. Increase Iowa native animal and plant habitat
3. Provide outdoor user destinations
4. Compliment McFarland Park's features



# PROCESS

## What did we do?

Story County Conservation hired RDG Planning & Design, Inc (RDG). to develop a Concept Plan (with phasing options) for the Deppe Property to help secure the necessary funding required to purchase and acquire the property from INHF. Scope of services included the following:

- Discovery
- Engagement
- Programming & Concept Development
- Delivery of a Master Plan

### Kickoff Meeting and Site Tour Key Points- October 2021 (See Appendix A)

- Opportunity to enhance/conservate natural resources/habitats
- Should support the idea of “Outdoors for All”
- Keep a light touch and observe both the wishes of the Deppe family and the goals of the Story County Conservation Board.

### SCC Staff Listening Session Key Points- October 2021 (See Appendix B)

- Identified gaps in the SCC Park System
  - Wetland complexes
  - Dog training areas
  - Primitive camping
  - People still not knowing about SCC parks/opportunities
  - Prairie reconstruction/pollinator habitat

- A County Space Needs Assessment is (was) underway
  - Led by Facilities Management Group
- Understanding relationships with neighbors
  - Met with the nearest neighborhood association a couple months previous with INHF
  - Understanding both access and privacy
- Discussed future funding opportunities

### Public Engagement- November 2021-January 2022

Public engagement was solicited through the following means. More than 300 responses were received.

- Email
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Online Survey
- Open House at the Conservation Center at McFarland Park (1-6-2022)
- WHO-TV video

### Key Points from the responses (See Appendix C)

- Trails were by far the most requested amenity

- Other common priorities included:
  - ADA access
  - Animal and plant habitat restoration
  - Education
  - Nature viewing and resting
  - Picnic area/shelter
  - Restrooms

### Story County Conservation Board Presentation of Draft Plan- February 14, 2022

### Watershed Analysis- November 2021

RDG performed a watershed analysis for the Deppe Property to consider options for a water feature on the site (See Appendix D). It included the following steps.

- Visual Terrain Assessment
- Watershed Identification and Delineation
- Considered guidance outlined by Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Department and the Iowa Stormwater Manual



# FINDINGS

## What did we learn?

- People enjoy and value activities they can do outside/in nature with people they love
- Respondents prefer non-consumptive recreation.
- Respondents prioritized natural trails, habitat restoration, wildlife viewing, environmental education, and a water feature.
  - There are many perspectives on trail types, trail surfaces and trail use.
  - Platforms, benches and shelters were requested to picnic, rest and view nature.
  - Active and passive education were requested
- Neighbors are concerned about noise and privacy
- Potential park users are concerned about noise from the adjoining Interstate

**Over 300 responses  
were submitted through:**

- In-person public meeting
- Online survey
- WHO-TV video
- Facebook
- Instagram
- E-mail



# CONCEPT PLAN

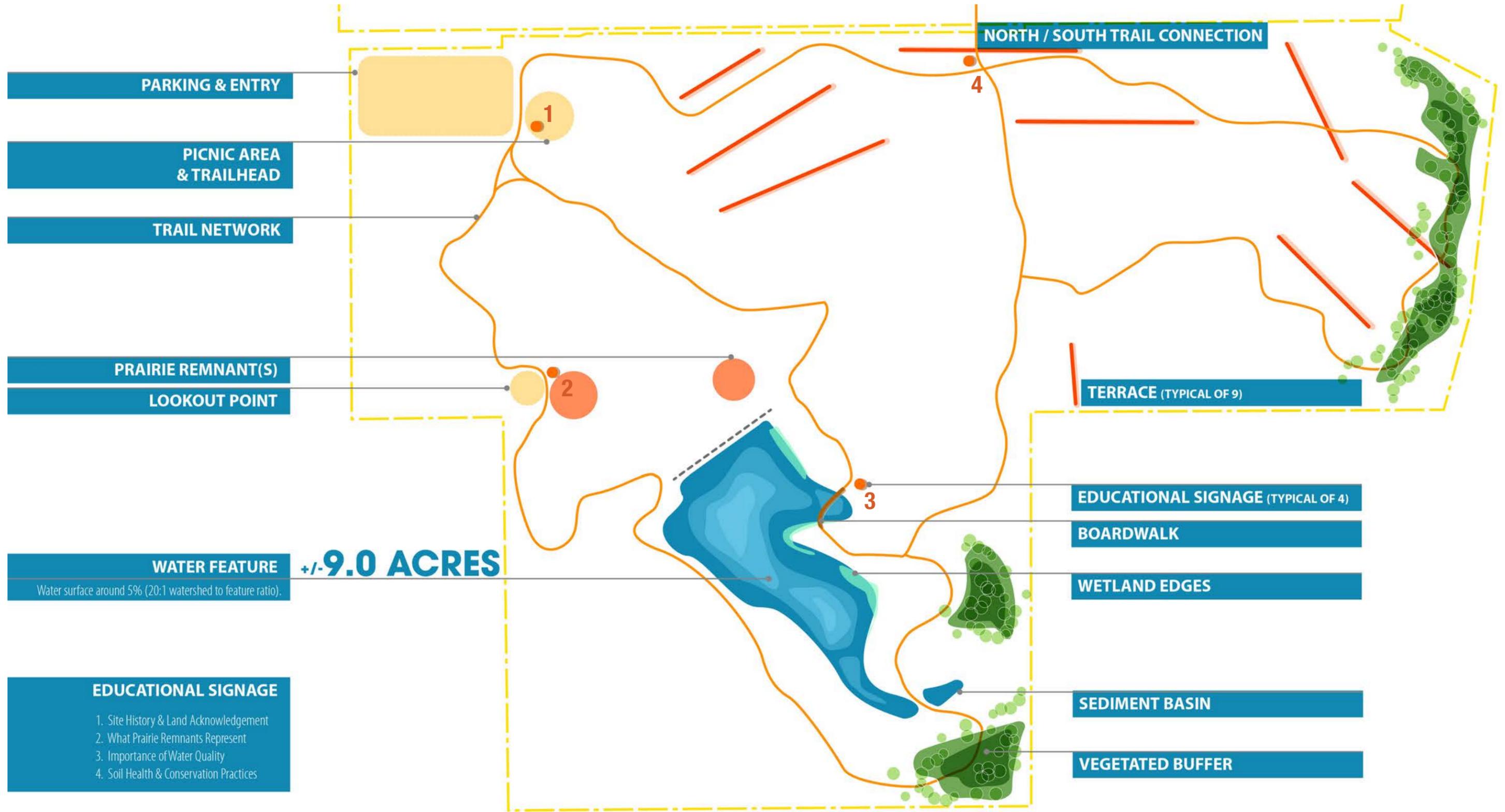
The proposed features were articulated by SCC staff and board members as well as the public and other supporters. The features are aligned with the SCC mission and property goals.

## Property features include:

- Accessible picnic area and shelter with parking
- Educational signage/interpretation featuring:
  - Site history & Land acknowledgement
  - Significance of prairie remnants
  - Importance of water quality
  - Soil health & Conservation practices
- Expanded trail networks with connections to McFarland Park and trailhead
- Lookout/Boardwalk
- Prairie restoration
- Preservation of terraces
- Vegetated buffers
- Water feature - up to 9-acres







# CONCEPT DIAGRAM



# OPINION OF PROBABLE COST

## CONSIDERATIONS

This planning level opinion of probable cost identifies costs associated with the program and general sizing of potential features on the Deppe Property. As plans are advanced, costs will adjust in relation to the refined programming, size, finish, grading needs, design fees, and schedule for each phased improvement project [assuming the project is phased]. The costs represented here are in 2022 dollars and will need to be adjusted for inflation on future work.

## TOTALS

**Approximate Construction Cost** +/- \$2,547,500.00

**Approximate Design Fees** \$153,000.00 - \$255,000.00

(APPROX. 6-10 PERCENT OF CONSTRUCTION COST)

(BASED ON 2022 DOLLARS)

(DOES NOT INCLUDE LAND ACQUISITION, SURVEY, GEOTECHNICAL, & TESTING)

## PLAN COMPONENTS

### Trail Network

+/- 380,000.00

### Water Feature & Sediment Basin (8-9 AC)

+/- 1,200,000.00

(INCLUDES STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE)

### Boardwalk

+/- 250,000.00

(APPROX. 150 LN FT)

### Stream Restoration

+/- 150,000.00

### Lookout Tower

+/- \$250,000.00

(ASSUMING 15' x 15' PLATFORM AT 20' TALL)

### Wayfinding Signage

+/- \$12,500.00

### Parking

+/- 105,000.00

### Picnic Area / Shade Structure

+/- \$200,000.00

(ASSUMING 15' x 15' PLATFORM AT 20' TALL)

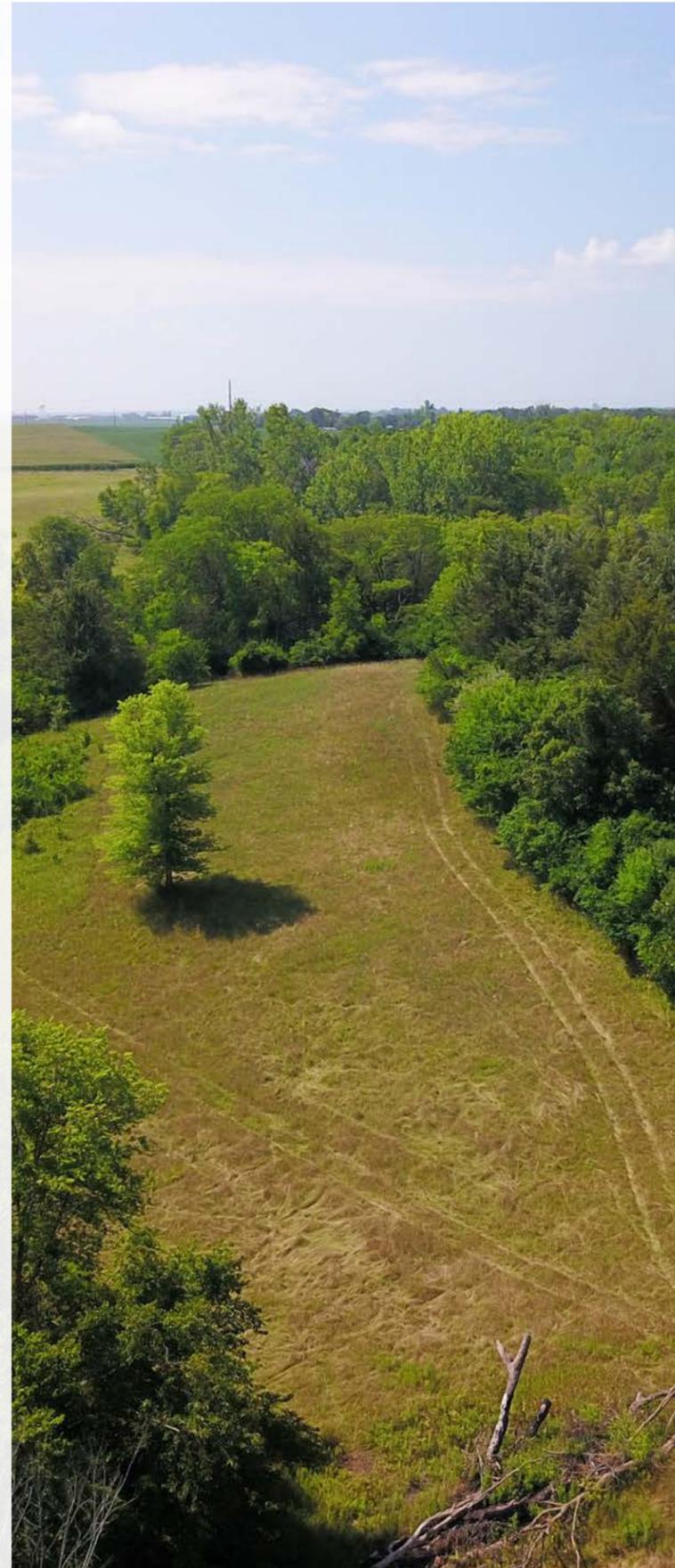
(ASSUMING MANUFACTURED SYSTEM)

### \*Vegetated Buffer

DEPENDENT ON COUNTY PLANS

### \*Prairie Restoration/ Wetland Seeding

DEPENDENT ON COUNTY PLANS



# CONCLUSION

This property, adjacent to McFarland Park, provides an important opportunity to protect an additional 127 acres and expand the number and diversity of users. This concept plan illustrates intentional development of this property to match the SCC mission, and desires of SCC partners and users. The plan follows the four goals for the property- as identified by the Conservation Board. Protection and development of this property will improve the natural resources of Story County and improve the quality of life for Story County residents and visitors.

Not every idea made it into the final plan document, as one park cannot be all things for all people, but the ideas shared, and conversations had will be taken into account in regard to the overall strategy for conservation and recreation in Story County in the future.

This conceptual plan was developed to identify potential opportunities and amenities for the Deppe Property. This plan is preliminary and subject to future discovery, input, design and funding efforts.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Kickoff Meeting

---

The Consultant Team visited Story County on Monday, October 4, 2021. Activities included:

- Meeting with Director Cox, SCC staff and two SCC board members
- Tour of the Deppe Property
- GoPro footage available
- SCC Board shared goals/vision/ideas
- Reviewed the wishes of the Deppe Family

### Key Takeaways:

- Bob Deppe is very proud of his terraces and grassland
- The Board had discussed several ideas for the property including:
  - Thinking about the park with int the context of the whole park system
  - Complementing McFarland Park
  - A ‘light touch’ to keep it natural
  - Opportunities to enhance/conserv natural resources and habitats
  - Possible phased approaches
  - Supporting ‘Outdoors for All’
  - This plan should be connected to other county plans

### Team observations:

- Mostly brome grass
- Some nice oak trees
- Surrounded by road, highway, farms, a neighborhood and McFarland Park
- No visible tile outlets from farmland-likely buried
- Stream isn’t in bad shape
- Understory and mid-level plants and shrubs need to be managed
- Hills and topography considered

## Appendix B: Staff Listening Sessions

---

The Consultant Team interviewed Story County Conservation Staff members via Zoom on Thursday, October 14, 2021. Below is a synopsis.

### What gaps are there in the Story County park system today)?

- Wetland complexes
- Primitive camping
- Dog training locations
- Mountain biking and equestrian trails could be expanded
- “A lot of folks in the Ames area still don’t know who we (SCC) are.”
- Could this project lighten the load of East and West Peterson?
- Pollinator habitat
- High-quality prairie construction

### Where are we at with the County Space Needs Assessment?

- Future building locations have been suggested
- Pretty good footprint to work with at McFarland
- Conservation Center and Shop need expansion

### What are relationships with the neighbors like?

- Met with the association a couple of months ago (with INHF)
- Supportive of more passive recreation
- Have requested a trail connection to McFarland
- Safety improvement needed for the road
- May need to develop an access for the neighborhood

### Additional Comments

- Environmental education opportunities are possible
- Think about accessibility
- Technology and videography can be used to tell the story
- Love the landscape of the property
- May need a barrier from the interstate

## Appendix C: Public Engagement – Summary of Feedback

---

### Over 300 responses were submitted through:

- Public meeting
- Online survey
- WHO-TV clip
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Email

### Most often suggested:

- Trails (by far)
- Animal and plant habitat restoration
- Nature viewing and resting

- Education
- Water feature, wetlands, pond
- Disc golf course
- Picnic area
- Restrooms
- ADA accessible features

### Sometimes suggested:

- Camping (mostly primitive)
- East and west side sound and neighborhood buffers
- New conservation/education/nature center

- Keep it wild
- Parking
- Playground
- Signage

### Rarely mentioned:

- Consumptive recreation (hunting/fishing/trapping)
- Dog park/area/off leash training
- Drinking fountain
- Equestrian use
- Observation tower

## Appendix D: Watershed Analysis

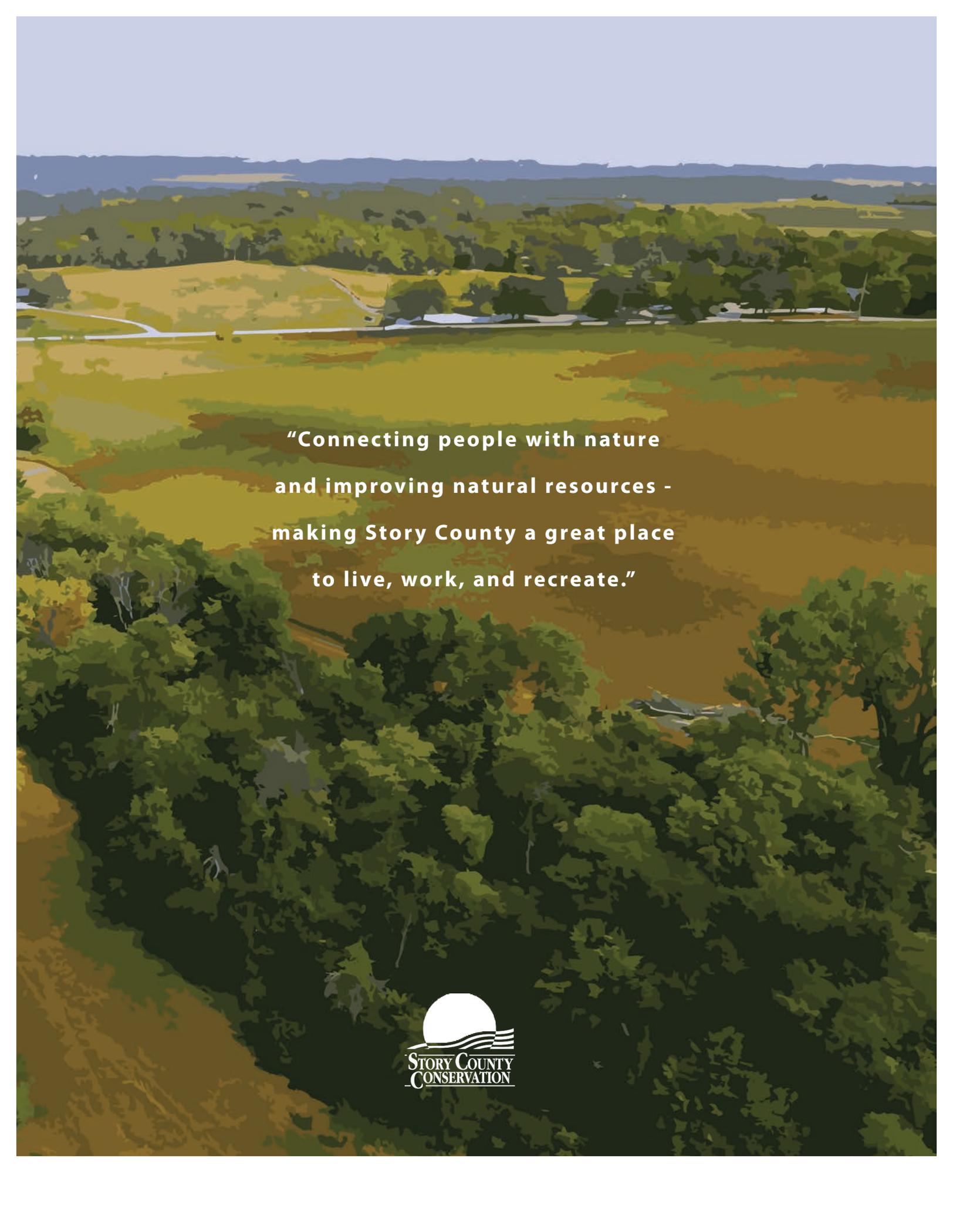
---

The Design Team performed a watershed analysis for the Deppe Property to consider options for a water feature on the site. The process began with visual assessment of the area, observing terrain, possible access locations and key resources that the team should avoid impacting.

For each potential location, the RDG defined a land area or individual watershed. After observing the land uses in the watershed (mostly agricultural fields with some CRP and brome grass) and using an

application called StreamStats, Greg was able to review and determine how much water could drain to the site from the surrounding land to support a potential water feature. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Fisheries Department recommends that a pond should be about 5% of the total watershed area. That's a ratio of approximately 20:1 that has been found to successfully support fish populations and serve as a healthy pond habitat.

The team also considered guidance outlined by the Iowa Stormwater Manual about how a pond should be designed and what features should be included. The future water feature will have the ability to reduce runoff rates to downstream areas like the rates seen in a tallgrass prairie. The additional benefits could include reduced channel erosion and flood potential, and improved water quality in the South Skunk River watershed.



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

