

FY21 Annual Report

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



Connecting with Nature

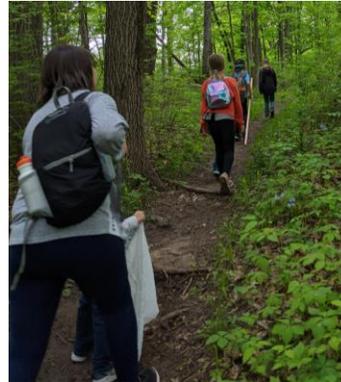


Table of Contents

At A Glance	3
Introduction	4
Boards and Staff	5
Annual Highlights.....	6
Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM).....	9
Environmental Education	14
Outreach.....	13
Volunteers.....	15
Story County Conservation Partners	16
Story County Conservation Board Meeting Summaries	17
Grants Awarded.....	18
Additional Leadership Roles	18
Financial Reports.....	19
Story County Conservation Properties Map.....	24
Story County Conservation Parks and Natural Areas Matrix.....	25



School program



Social distancing at Dakins Lake

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

- Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor- Phase #3 (trail connector)
- Praeri Rail Trail extension to Dakins Lake
- Hickory Grove Lake restoration
- Hickory Grove Park trail and road resurfacing, bridge over tubes, and paving trail to island bridge
- Hickory Grove office/shop expansion
- Hickory Grove Park education kiosks
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Slater connection and Phase #2 paving
- Wicks parking lot
- Praeri Rail Trail resurfacing
- McFarland Park entrance sign
- West Peterson Park vault toilet
- West Peterson Park entrance signs
- Habitat restoration at multiple properties
- 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

- Water quality monitoring programs
- Sensitive Areas Inventory (county-wide)
- McFarland Lake restoration design
- Dakins Lake cabin
- Sleepy Hollow restoration
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail wayfinding signs and information kiosks
- Derecho damages/cleanup
- Hickory Grove Lake walleye rearing pond
- Hickory Grove Park Oriole Lodge concrete picnic area on lake side

Upcoming Projects

- Oxbow restorations on the South Skunk River
- Edge of field water quality projects
- Hannum's Mill Dam mitigation
- Hickory Grove Park sewer replacement
- US Army Corps of Engineers land acquisition
- McFarland Lake renovation
- Dakins Lake playground updates and primitive campground improvements
- West Peterson Park beach improvements
- South Skunk River streambank stabilization
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving-Phase #3A
- Hickory Grove Park entrance monument and park signs

Introduction

The pandemic and its effects on society have had a significant impact on how people interact with the outdoors. Participation in outdoor recreation has reached new highs. Environmental Education has adapted to individual and small group settings primarily outdoors or virtually. Volunteerism has increased. These trends will continue to influence the services we provide.

Meanwhile, land protection and water quality improvement are paramount to a healthy environment. The tasks of improving our water and protecting our natural resources are monumental. However, the vision is bigger and the passion to always make progress toward that vision is well fueled. Together, we will continue to connect people with nature and improve our natural resources.

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



Craig Meyers
Chair, Story County Conservation Board

Boards and Staff

Story County Board of Supervisors

Linda Murken (2020-2021)
Lisa Heddens (2020-2021)
Latifah Faisal (2020-2021)

Story County Conservation Board

Dr. Nancy Franz (2020-2021)
Christine Laumer (2020-2021)
Craig Meyers (2020-2021)
Dr. Jim Pease (2020-2021)
Ted Tedesco (2020-2021)
Linda Murken, ex-officio (2020-2021)

Story County Conservation Staff

Administration

Michael Cox, Director
Marianne Harrelson, Financial Data Manager
Elizabeth Jackson, Administrative Assistant
(July 2020 to Jan. 2021)
Brittany Ridgway, Administrative Assistant
(March 2021 to current)

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

Russ DeWall, Conservation Technician II
Luke Feilmeier, Park Ranger
Joe Hill, Conservation Technician
Beau Hoppe, Conservation Technician
(July 2020 to Aug. 2020)
Dillon Schmidt, Conservation Technician
Hunter Simmons, Conservation Technician
(Sept. 2020 to current)
Jacob Smith, Conservation Technician
(Sept. 2020 to current)
Brandon Clough, Natural Resources Specialist
Derek Seward, Trails/Natural Resource
Technician
Patrick Shehan, Special Projects Ranger
Danny Simcox, Park Ranger
Ryan Wiemold, Parks Superintendent

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Mgmt.

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

Seasonal Employees – 2020

Jeremy Anderson, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Kaleb Angell, Conservation Aide
Dylan Childs, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Tanner Christiansen, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Nolan Emley, 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, Park Ranger Aide
Allison Stegmann, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Sean Vellinga, Conservation Aide
John Weber, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide

Seasonal Employees – 2021

Noah Atterbury, Park Ranger Aide
Emily Brinkman, Conservation Aide
Bretteny Brownmiller, Conservation Aide
Brittany Burton, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Alexandria Ellsworth, Conservation Aide
Rachel Heatwole, Naturalist
Trevor Heinen, Conservation Aide
Paige Henggeler, Outreach Assistant
Kari Jeffrey, Naturalist
Carter Meislahn, Conservation Aide
Pamela Miksell, Vegetation Mgmt. Aide
Reaghan Oakleaf, Conservation Aide
Alexander Paoli, Conservation Aide
Caleb Postol, Conservation Aide
Kaleb Ruffcorn, Conservation Aide

Annual Highlights

Recreation Enhancements

- Phase 3 of the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor was constructed adding an additional 2.5 miles of paved trail to what is now known as the Tedesco Connector Trail. Trail amenities include benches, a bike repair station, birdhouses, and tree and shrub plantings. Trail amenities and habitat were made possible by many community donors.



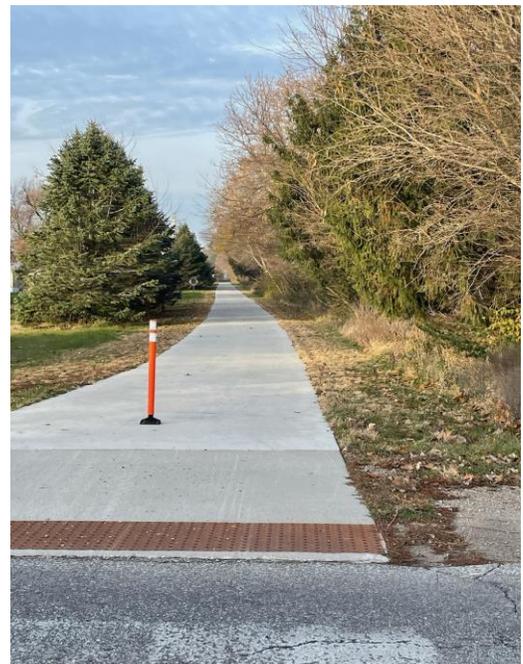
- The main park interior roads at Hickory Grove Park were resurfaced with asphalt.
- The trail to the island at Hickory Grove Park was surfaced with asphalt and will have a gate and light installed.



- The Hickory Grove shop used its existing footprint and remodeled; expanding office space and creating more heated shop space.
- Entrance Monuments were completed at McFarland Park and West Peterson Park. This branding matches the entrances at Dakins Lake and Hickory Grove Park.



- The HOINT was paved between the High Trestle Trail and Slater Trailhead/Arboretum. This .75 miles of trail runs through the City of Slater.



- Wicks Wildlife Area came on board, was signed, and had a parking lot installed. These 55 acres are comprised of restored prairie and riverine forest and features several oxbows from the Skunk River.



- The Dotson and Deppe properties were protected acquisitions. The Dotson property is home to several native prairie remnants.
- A vault toilet was installed at West Peterson Park that features two unisex restrooms.



- Informational kiosks were installed at West Peterson Park and Hickory Grove Park that educate park users on park history, natural resources, water quality, and park use. These match the same style used at Tedesco and Dakins Lake.



- The Prairie Rail Trail and Hertz Woods trails were resurfaced with limestone.



Natural Resource Enhancements

- A Watershed Management Plan for McFarland Lake was completed by ISU and will be used as a roadmap for lake restoration in the upcoming years.



- Conservation Corps of Iowa (CCI) and staff continued restoration efforts at Hickory Grove Park, Jennett Heritage Area, and the Praeri Rail Trail.



- Trees and Shrubs were planted at Tedesco Connector Trail.



- Staff was recognized with a first-place award at the Iowa County Conservation System (ICCS) Conference from the Isaak Walton League Wildlife Habitat Improvement Award for 2020.

- Staff spent much of the year performing downed tree cleanup from the Derecho Storm that occurred on August 10, 2020. In total with other Derecho repair efforts close to 2500 staff hours were put towards the recovery effort. SCC also utilized CCI and contractors for some of the cleanup efforts.



- Staff continued prairie seed collection with hand-harvest events and combining local ecotype seed.



Natural Resources Statistics for 2020:

- Planted 621 lbs. of prairie seed on 36 acres
- Planted 84 trees and shrubs at Tedesco Connector Trail
- Conducted 370 acres of prescribed fires
- Acquired 90 acres of conservation areas
- Harvested 320 lbs. of combine run and hand harvest prairie seed

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM)

- Staff completed 82 work orders. Staff planted 18 acres in roadsides at 62 different roadside sites. Two acres of erosion control mat was installed at two sites. Four sites were planted in natural areas for a total of 12 additional acres. A considerable amount of time was spent on seedbed preparation, establishment, and maintenance on TELC Phase 3.
- Staff foliar sprayed 225 centerline miles of roadsides with herbicide to address invasive weed and brush concerns. 17 miles of brush was sprayed in sensitive areas. Staff also sprayed 16 miles of shoulders to control emergent vegetation.
- Brush control was contracted in Howard, Warren, Lincoln, Sherman, and Richland townships. Several site distance issues at driveways and intersections were mechanically cut by staff.
- Staff was able to burn both in the fall and spring during this fiscal year. The prescribed fire program consisted of 12 roadside burns for a total of 24 acres. Staff burned two seed nurseries and one natural area for an additional 29 acres.



- There were 15 noxious weed complaints that were addressed by phone or in-person and eight certified letters were sent out.

- Trees and brush were cut and piled on Grant #13, Grant #5, and Hamilton-Story #1. Re-sprouts were sprayed on Milford #69. Piles were burned on Hardin-Story #3 and Grant #13. Contractors began a spray program in four drainage districts.
- Seed harvest produced 320 pounds of usable prairie seed. Hand-harvested forbs from volunteer events and SCC staff collections increased the diversity of the seed harvested by combines.
- Staff assisted approximately 31 landowners/operators with the implementation of conservation practices along open ditches and on private ground. There were 317 acres planted with SCC rental equipment. Working with the local Pheasants Forever Chapter, staff distributed 1,357 pounds of native grass and forb seed to landowners.
- Staff installed Roadside Planting signs on ten miles of diverse right-of-way.



- Staff submitted two Living Roadway Trust Fund Grants to assist in the purchase of Prescribed Fire PPE, Weather Monitoring Equipment, and a 2021 Chevrolet 3500 HD truck.
- Community involvement included a presentation with Conservation Corp of Iowa. Staff worked with the Iowa State Extension office to provide educational material for Iowa Pesticide Applicator annual training. Staff was active with the local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Nevada Historical Society, and Pheasants Forever Chapter.

IRVM FIELD OPERATIONS COMPARISON BY FISCAL YEAR			
	FY19	FY20	FY21
Work Orders Completed	31	101	82
Roadside Plantings (sites)	34	73	62
Roadside Plantings (acres)	23	56	19
Custom Plantings (sites)	3	1	0
Custom Plantings (acres)	4.5	5	0
Conservation/Other Plantings (sites)	0	0	4
Conservation/Other Plantings (acres)	0	0	13
Roadside Burns (sites)	5	0	12
Roadside Burns (acres)	10.4	0	24
Roadside Weeds Sprayed (miles)	225	219	225
Foliar Brush Sprayed (miles)	15	35	17
Equipment Rentals (landowners)	15	26	27
Equipment Rentals (acres)	91	222	317.5
Pounds of Seed Harvested	372	116	320
Volunteer Hours	118.25	88	155
Drainage District (amount billed)	\$17,168.39	\$30,771.32	\$16,619.47
Drainage District Revenue Received	\$18,252.75	\$24,758.84	\$30,351.50



Seeding a ditch with the hydroseeder

Environmental Education

- Story County Conservation conducted 222 education and outreach programs resulting in over 4,094 contacts through 44 indoor presentations, 156 outdoor experiences, four service-learning opportunities, and 18 co-sponsored events.
- From July to February all environmental education efforts were virtual or self-led activities. Virtual programs included O.W.L.S. (Older Wiser Livelier Souls) presentations, environmental literature book clubs, and landscape diversification presentations. Self-led hikes included treasure hunts, word scramble hikes, and storybook walks. Positive comments via email and social media were received. The actual number of people who participated in these self-led activities is unknown.
- Public outdoor hikes and programming started slowly in November and by March a couple of indoor presentations were conducted. A few schools participated in May field trips. Several service-learning opportunities known as “Weedin’ Out Wednesdays” were popular.
- Staff updated the Pioneer Day outdoor experience to be more inclusive to all communities on Story County and changed the name to Iowa History Day.
- Staff created two interpretive panels (fishing and history of the area) for Peterson Park West and four (watersheds, lake restoration, history of the area, and recreational opportunities) for Hickory Grove Lake.
- *Nature Connect*, SCC’s Service Assistance Program in cooperation with Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA) started in 2021. Qualifying Story County residents receive a “50% off” code for online registration for programs and services. Discount codes expire yearly. Recipients must contact MICA staff each calendar year to receive a new online registration discount code.
- Started a partnership with Cultivating Hope Farms to provide environmental education programming for people with different abilities.
- Staff led efforts on the rewrite of three of Iowa’s Nature Series booklets with Iowa State University Extension and Iowa Association of Naturalists.

Water Testing

- Story County Conservation purchased materials for the creation of 23 water quality testing kits. These kits allowed volunteers and staff to test for dissolved oxygen concentration, temperature, pH, chloride, nitrate-N, and transparency.
- Currently 20 active volunteers and monitoring 26 streams in Story County.
- Story County staff is monitoring 11 streams and 2 lakes in Story County.
- Data is entered on cleanwaterhub.org.



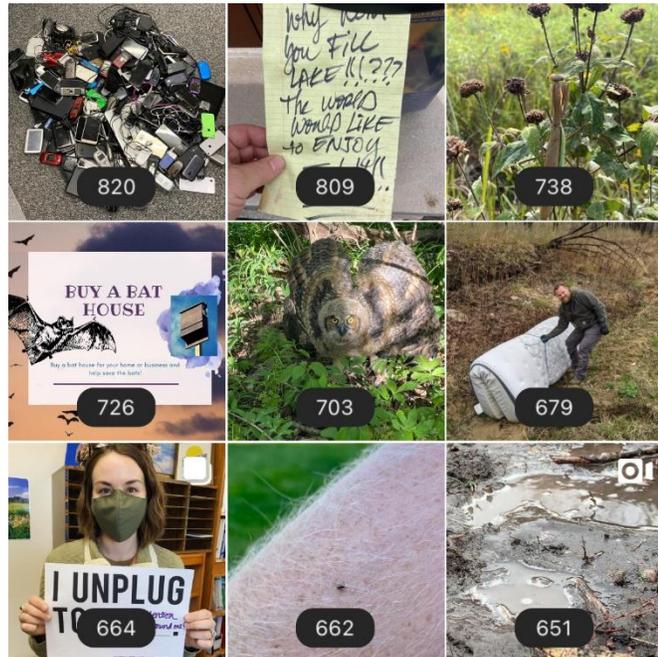
- Summer camps were held with fewer participants per camp, one camp per location, self-brought snacks, limited travel in county vehicles, and no overnight camps. Twelve new half or full-day skills camps were offered in place of overnight camps.

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 500+ copies were distributed to area libraries, city halls, and businesses. Newsletter holders were installed at kiosks in parks with the highest visitation (West Peterson Park, Dakins Lake, Hickory Grove Park, and the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor); the response was positive and it appears we're reaching more users. Event flyers, press releases, and paid advertisements with various local publications also helped us spread the news of our programs and projects.

Experimentation with an email marketing platform, MailChimp, began towards the end of the fiscal year. The platform provides branding and tracking tools and should make it easier for the public to sign up for our press releases or e-newsletter.

Many of our social media strategies prompted by COVID continued, translating into steady growth across all platforms. Other outreach efforts included committing to a monthly spot on local radio station KHOI to provide regular conservation updates to the public.



Top Instagram content

Content

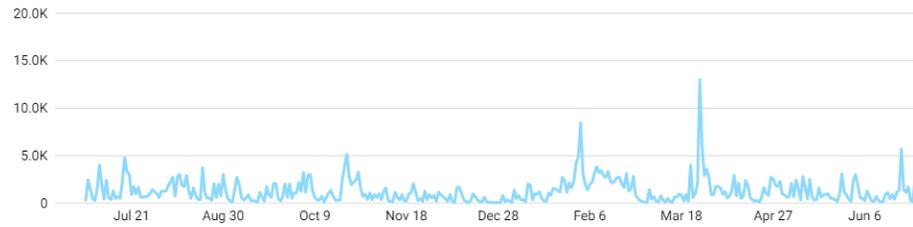
Sort by: Reach

	Thu Mar 25, 6:00pm It's migration season and yo...		Mon Apr 26, 1:35pm Here are the submissions fo...		Fri Apr 2, 8:43am Shout out to these hard wor...
Reach	28.7K	Reach	5.9K	Reach	5.7K
	Tue Jun 22, 9:45am We hear ya! Years of restora...		Tue Jun 1, 6:29pm It's baby deer season! Fa...		
Reach	5.5K	Reach	5.5K		

Top Facebook content

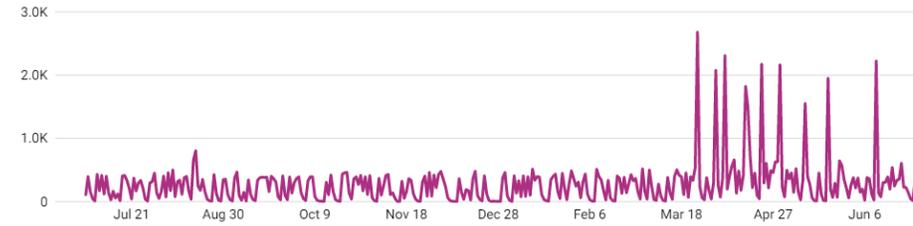
Facebook Page Reach ⓘ

168,945 ↑ 87.3%



Instagram Reach ⓘ

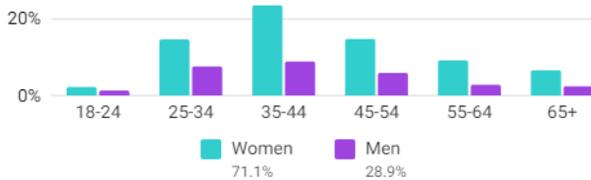
22,327 ↑ 919.5%



Facebook Page Followers ⓘ

5.1K

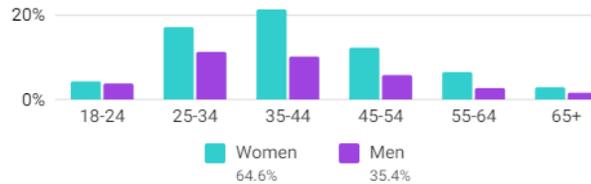
Age & Gender ⓘ



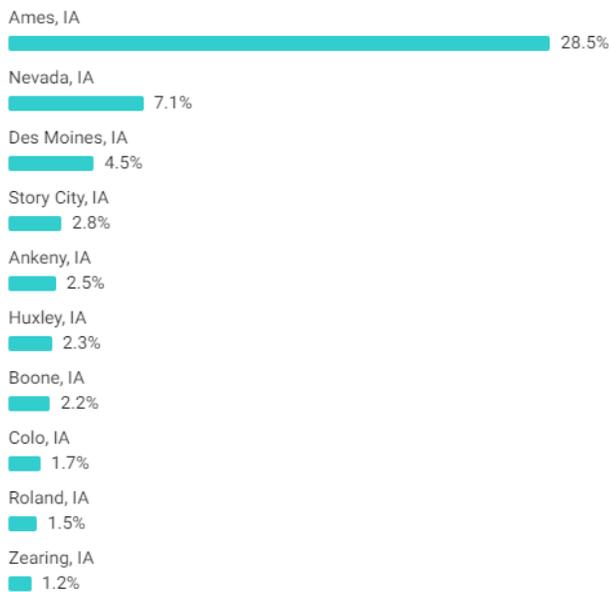
Instagram Followers ⓘ

1.7K

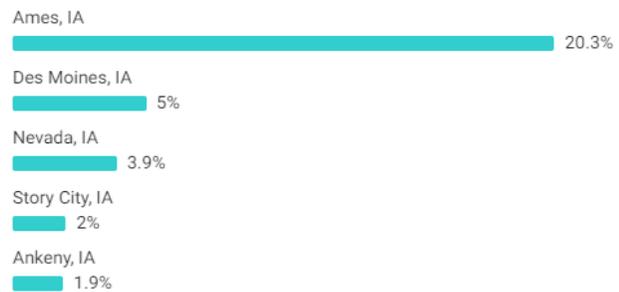
Age & Gender ⓘ



Top Cities



Top Cities



Volunteers

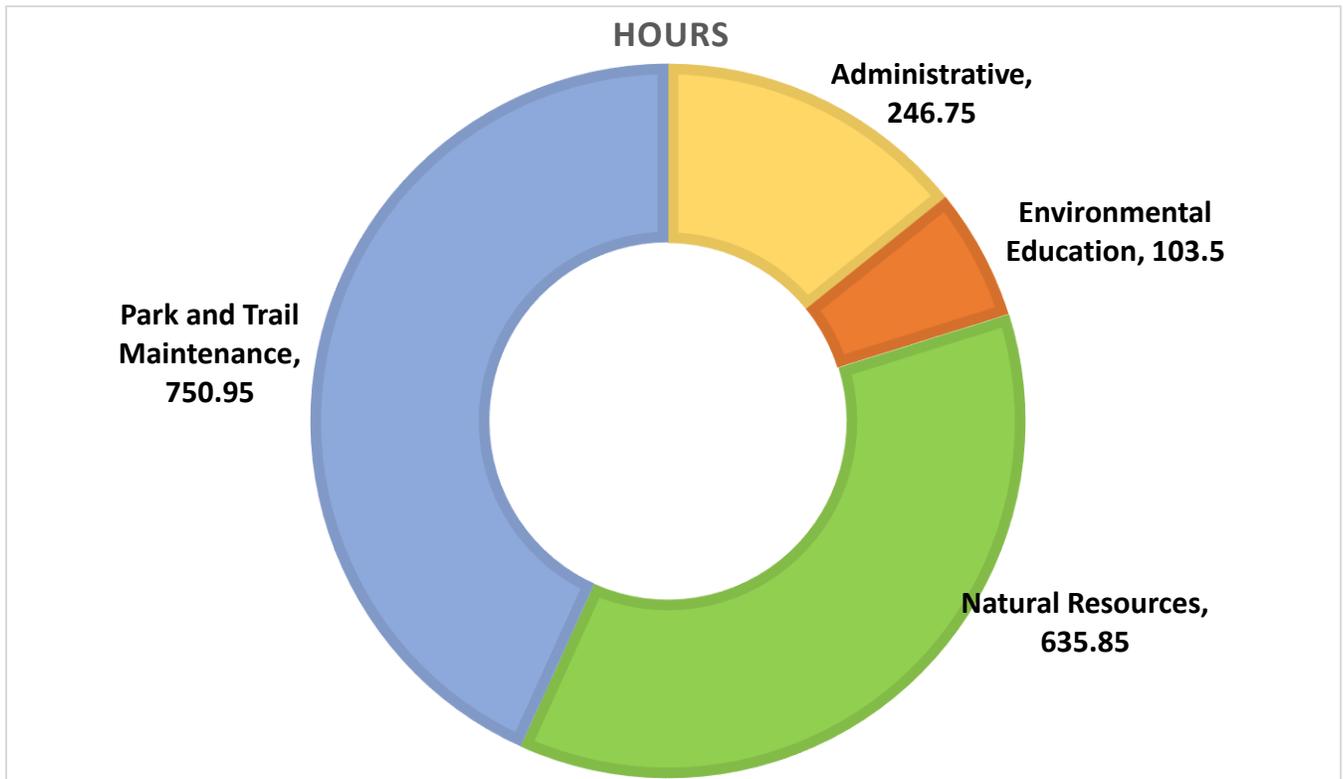
Volunteers are integral in attaining SCC's mission. Volunteer hours logged in FY21 included: serving on the Story County Conservation Board, providing office/clerical help, cleaning SCC parks through the Adopt-A-Park program, providing natural resource and land stewardship work, collecting prairie seed, and helping with environmental education programs.

New volunteer efforts included the development of the Natural Resource Steward position, where volunteers who obtain their pesticide applicator license receive training and supplies to remove invasive species in SCC parks. At the end of the fiscal year, two volunteers had been onboarded and were actively battling honeysuckle on a regular basis.



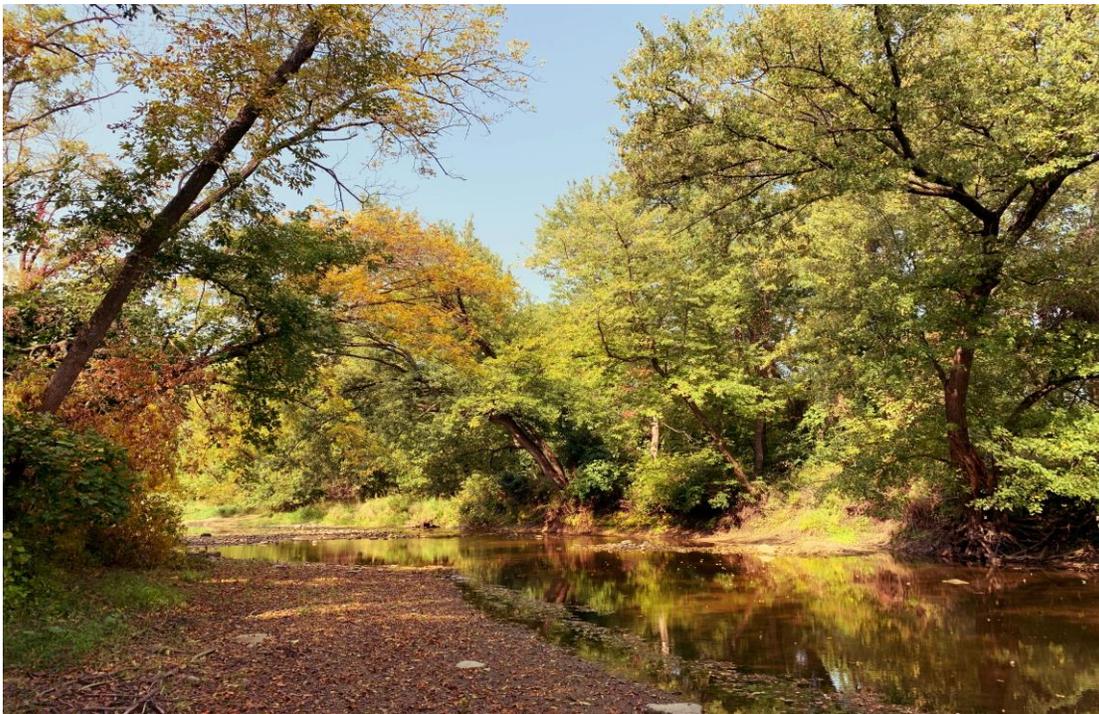
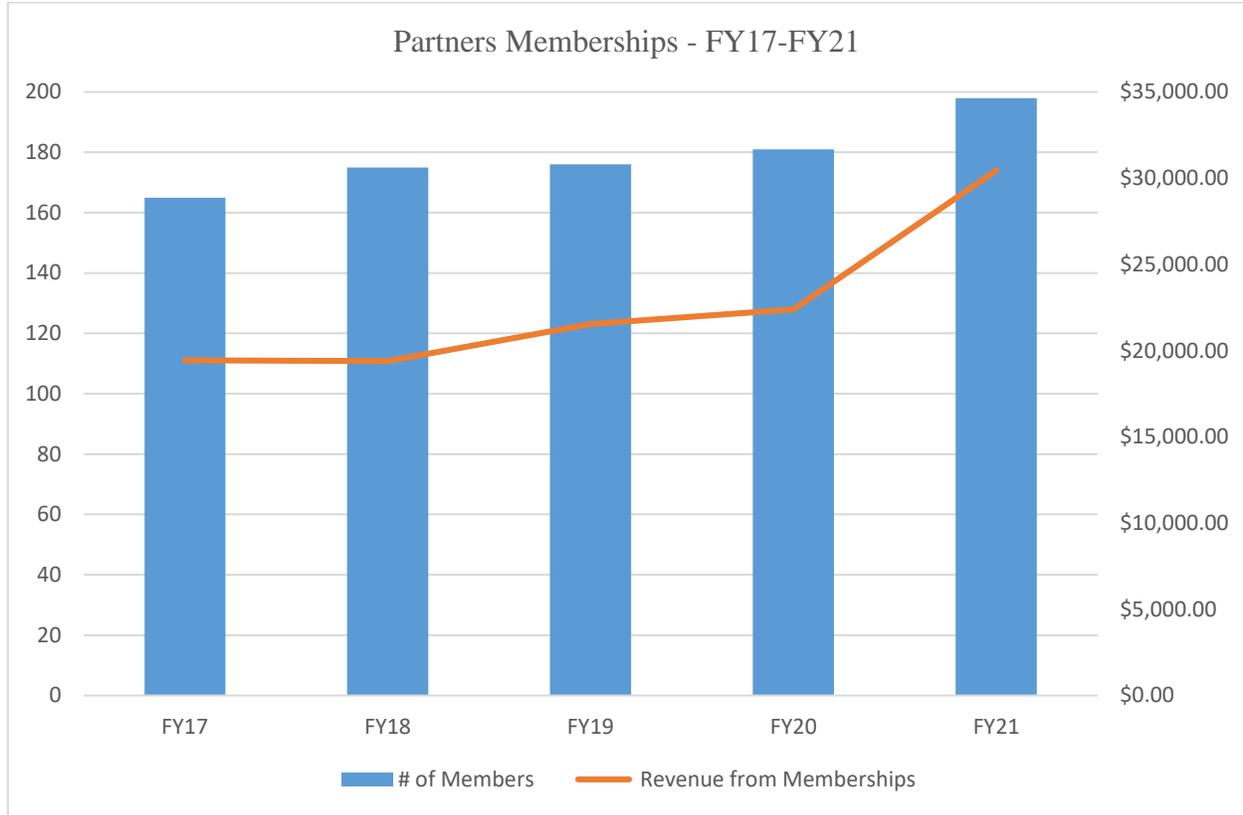
Many individuals, clubs, and corporate groups also donated their time as water quality monitors throughout the county. Response for this new opportunity was overwhelming and it is anticipated these volunteers will continue their efforts into the future.

SCC recertified as a Service Enterprise (recertification every three years). The 1,742 volunteer hours donated in FY21 roughly equate to one full-time staff. Using the Independent Sector volunteer service value of \$25.16 per hour, volunteers provided \$43,828.72 of service to SCC in FY21.



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 191 memberships during FY21 and raised a total of \$30,450.00 towards the purchase of the Osheim tract along County Road E-18 and the South Skunk River.



Osheim property

Story County Conservation Board Meeting Summaries

July 2, 2020 – via conference call

The board approved the following:

- Rotenone application at Hickory Grove Lake by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

July 13, 2020 – via conference call

- Correction to Resolution #2020-04 for FY21 salaries for two staff members
- Starting the hiring process for a full-time Conservation Technician
- Memorial bench for Chris Jutting at McFarland Park
- Memorial bench for Dennis Jones at the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail
- Naming the Touch-A-Life trail overlook deck at McFarland Park, the Sally and John Greve: McFarland Reflections Overlook
- The Conservation Feasibility Study
- Plans for the Hickory Grove Park road resurfacing project
- Contract with Iowa State University Water Quality Research Lab for the McFarland Lake Watershed Management Plan
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Iowa for a restoration project at Hickory Grove Park, a trail enhancement project at McFarland Park, and for natural resource work
- Change order with Howrey Construction for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Phase 2 project
- Contract with Williamson Electric for electrical services at the IRVM shop

Erica Place, Outreach Coordinator, submitted a written annual report.

Director Cox updated the board on the ICCS conference is still planning to take place with a COVID-19 mitigation plan, Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor Phase 3, Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Phase 2, Praeri Rail Trail, and the scheduling of Hickory Grove lake Rotenone treatment.

August 13, 2020 (postponed from August 10, due to Derecho storm – via conference call

The board approved the following:

- Conservation Center operations and public activities management protocols: COVID-19
- Outreach Assistant rehire
- Change order with Peterson Contractors, Inc. for the Praeri Rail Trail paving project
- Amendment to an agreement with Shive Hattery, Inc. for additional construction phase services for paving a portion of the Praeri Rail Trail
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Slater Connector final plans, specifications and form of contract and authorization to release bids
- Hickory Grove Park road resurfacing bid award to Manatt's, Inc.
- Hiring Hawkeye Truck to mount a hydroseeder on a truck

Danny Simcox, Park Ranger, submitted a written annual report and was available to make comments and answer questions.

Director Cox updated the board on the Derecho storm damages and the Hickory Grove Lake treatment.

September 2, 2020 – via conference call

The board approved the following:

- Contract with Manatt's, Inc. for Hickory Grove Park road resurfacing
- Bid award for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail – Slater Connector

Director Cox updated the board on Derecho storm damages and the City of Colo considering our connection to their sewer.

September 14, 2020 – via conference call

The board approved the following:

- Vegetation Management Aide seasonal hire and promotion of two Conservation Aides to Conservation Technicians
- Proclamation declaring October 2020 as Watershed Awareness Month
- Conservation Center use and indoor programming: COVID-19
- Funding to repair utilities at Dakins Lake due to the Derecho storm event
- Signing a letter in opposition to the USFWS decision to not designate critical habitat for the endangered Rusty Patch Bumble Bee

Jerry Keys, Environmental Education Coordinator, submitted a written annual report and was available to make comments and answer questions.

Danny Simcox, Park Ranger, presented a request for a Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Dakins

Director Cox updated the board that the City of Colo is moving forward with considering our request to connect to their wastewater treatment facility, Derecho storm cleanup, preparing the FY22 budgeting process, and requesting two hiring freeze exemptions for seasonal staff positions.

October 12, 2020 – via conference call

The board approved the following:

- Vegetation Management Aide seasonal hire
- Agreement with Iowa State University Conference Planning and Management for the 2021 Iowa's County Conservation System fall conference
- Entering the Headwaters of the South Skunk River Watershed Management Authority
- Letter of support for a Headwaters of the South Skunk River Watershed Management Authority planning grant application
- Discontinuation of the Story County Trails Advisory Committee

The board reviewed the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan

Luke Feilmeier, Park Ranger, submitted a written annual report and was available to make comments and answer questions.

Park Superintendent Wiemold updated the board on not opening the Conservation Center, the Dotson property, Hickory Grove sewer connection to City of Colo, the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Slater Connector and Phase 2 paving, Tedesco Environmental Learning Coordinator Phase 3, park maintenance and Derecho cleanup, stabilization work on Grant Creek at Jennett, and hiring Conservation Corps of Iowa to clear trees at Grant Creek.

November 9, 2020 – via Zoom

The board approved the following:

- Conservation Aide seasonal hire
- Purchase of Kenwood radios from RACOM
- Resolution #2021-01 approving an agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation for a Living Roadway Trust Fund Grant for a herbicide storage cage and shelving
- Resolution #2021-02 approving an agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation for a Living Roadway Trust Fund Grant for a tandem axle equipment trailer

- Resolution #2021-03 supporting a Fish Habitat Grant application for a walleye rearing pond and fish kettle at Hickory Grove Park
- Review FY22 budget proposals and Capital Improvement Plan

Director Cox updated the board on the Hickory Grove sewer project.

December 7, 2020 – via Zoom

Mike Meetz presented board member, Ted Tedesco, with the 2020 Olav Smedal Award.

The board approved the following:

- Story County Conservation board meeting dates for 2021
- Contract with Walker Brothers Roofing for the Hickory Grove Park building repairs
- Story County Conservation FY20 Annual Report
- FY22 Capital Improvement Project Plan
- FY22 Conservation and IRVM budget proposal

Director Cox updated the board on outdoor programming, RFQ's sent out for hanging tree limb removal, FEMA claim, and Hickory Grove sewer project.

January 11, 2021 – via Zoom

Officers elected for 2021 were Craig Meyers, chair; Christine Laumer, vice-chair; and Nancy Franz, secretary.

The board approved the following:

- Purchase of artwork at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor
- Prairie seed purchase from Diversity Farms
- Easement agreement with Iowa State University for the Tedesco Connector Trail
- Change order with Howrey Construction for the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor bid package #3-trail extension
- Change order with Howrey Construction for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Phase 1 paving project
- Two change orders with Howrey Construction for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Phase 2 paving project
- Resolution #2021-04 endorsing a grant application to the CIRTPA Transportation Alternative Program for hard surfacing/trail improvements on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail from the South Skunk River scenic bridge to 610th Avenue
- Contract with Tree Hugger Tree Care for removal of hanging limbs
- Cooperative agreement with Prairie Rivers of Iowa RC and D
- 2021 legislative priorities
- Hiring freeze exemption request for Administrative Assistant II position

Joe Kooiker, Vegetation Management Biologist, submitted a written annual report and Tyler Kelley, Vegetation Management Specialist, was available for comments and to answer questions.

Director Cox updated the board on the Feasibility Study for sustainable local funding, Wicks and Osheim properties, the Dotson property, Nature Connect program, FY22 work session with the Board of Supervisors, a draft agreement with the City of Colo, and a cultural study on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property.

February 8, 2021 – via Zoom

The board approved the following:

- Contract with Finco Tree/Wood Service for firewood sales at campgrounds
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Iowa for natural resource improvements at Carroll Prairie
- Postage meter lease agreement
- Amendment to Story County Conservation Law Enforcement Policy
- First reading of revisions to the Story County Conservation Rules and Regulations

Director Cox updated the board on updating the Strategic Plan, COVID-19 protocols, saturated buffers and edge of field practices, the Headwaters of the South Skunk River WMA grant contract, and review of the FY22 budget work sessions with the Board of Supervisors.

March 8, 2021 – via Zoom

Dan Haug with Prairie Rivers of Iowa presented information regarding the Story County Water Quality Monitoring Plan.

The board approved the following:

- Pay adjustment for Environmental Education Coordinator
- Conservation Center use and indoor programming management protocols: COVID-19
- Amended easement agreements with Iowa State University Foundation for the Tedesco Connector Trail
- Campground attendant contract for the first half of season at Dakins Lake
- Campground attendant contract for the full season at Hickory Grove Park
- Contract with Finch Livestock Exchange for management grazing in Story County Conservation areas
- Second reading of revisions to the Story County Conservation Rules and Regulations
- Reviewed the updated strategic plan

Ryan Wiemold, Park Superintendent, submitted a written annual report and was available to make comments and answer questions.

Director Cox updated the board on saturated buffer, bioreactor and edge of field practices, Hickory Grove Park celebration, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee, and the new three-year Collective Bargaining contract.

April 12, 2021 – via Zoom

The board approved the following:

- Summer seasonal hires
- Campground attendant contract for the second half of season at Dakins Lake
- Fish Habitat Stamp grant agreement #21-02 with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Contract with Shive-Hattery for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail signage design
- Contract with Shive-Hattery for the Hickory Grove Park walleye rearing pond design
- Purchase of park amenities for the Tedesco Connector Trail
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Iowa for natural resource improvements at Jennett Heritage Area
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Iowa for natural resource improvements at West Peterson Park
- Strategic Plan FY21-22

Director Cox updated the board on the McFarland Lake renovation, grants for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving, and the Hickory Grove grand reopening.

May 10, 2021 – via Zoom

Diane Birt, with the Outdoor Alliance of Story County (OAOSCO), updated the board on some projects they have been involved with and projects that they have partnered with Story County Conservation.

The board approved the following:

- One summer seasonal hire and three pay adjustments
- Collective Bargaining Agreement with Public, Professional, and Maintenance Employees Local 2003 (Conservation Unit)
- Contract with Shive-Hattery for McFarland Lake restoration design services
- Amendment to an agreement with Shive-Hattery for the Praeri Rail Trail paving project
- Resolution #2021-05 endorsing a grant application to the COVID-19 Relief Recreational Trails Program for hard surfacing/trail improvements on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail from the South Skunk River scenic bridge to county road S-14
- Memorial bench for Richard and Sharon Hunter at Hickory Grove Park
- Memorial bench for Jack and Evelyn Smith at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor
- Updates to the Story County Conservation Safety and Health Management Policy

Brandon Clough, Natural Resource Specialist, submitted a written annual report and was available to make comments and answer questions.

Director Cox updated the board on a request to Congressman Feenstra, switching the Board meetings back to in-person, the status of the Hickory Grove Lake sewer connection with the City of Colo, the Story County water quality group, and the Headwaters WMA.

June 14, 2021

The board approved the following:

- Resolution #2021-06 approving FY22 salaries for Story County Conservation employees
- Step and longevity adjustments for FY22
- Eliminating Face Coverings Policy for employees and implementing CDC guidance on wearing masks as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Updated Conservation Center use and indoor programming management protocols: COVID-19
- Resolution #2021-07 endorsing a grant application to the State Recreation Trails Program for hard surfacing/trail improvements on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail from the South Skunk River scenic bridge to 610th Avenue

Pat Shehan, Special Projects Ranger, submitted a written annual report and was available to make comments and answer questions.

Director Cox updated the board on the Colo sewer connection, ICCS Conference planning, edge of field practices, water testing, the Watershed Coordinator position, law enforcement issues, the Deppe property, and WREP and NAWCA grants.

Grants Awarded

The following grants and agreements were awarded in FY21. Expenditures and reimbursements may occur in the year awarded or over several years.

FUNDING SOURCE	TITLE	AMOUNT AWARDED
Iowa Department of Natural Resources - Fish Habitat Stamp Grant	Hickory Grove Lake Walleye Rearing Pond and Fish Kettle	\$56,428
Iowa Native Plant Society	Conservation Corps of Iowa remnant work at West Peterson Park	\$1,250
Iowa Department of Transportation - Living Roadway Trust Fund	Tandem Axle Equipment Trailer	\$4,000
Iowa Department of Transportation - Living Roadway Trust Fund	Herbicide Storage Cage	\$3,000
Total Grants/Agreements – FY21		\$64,678

Additional Leadership Roles

Michael Cox – County Conservation Directors Association 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

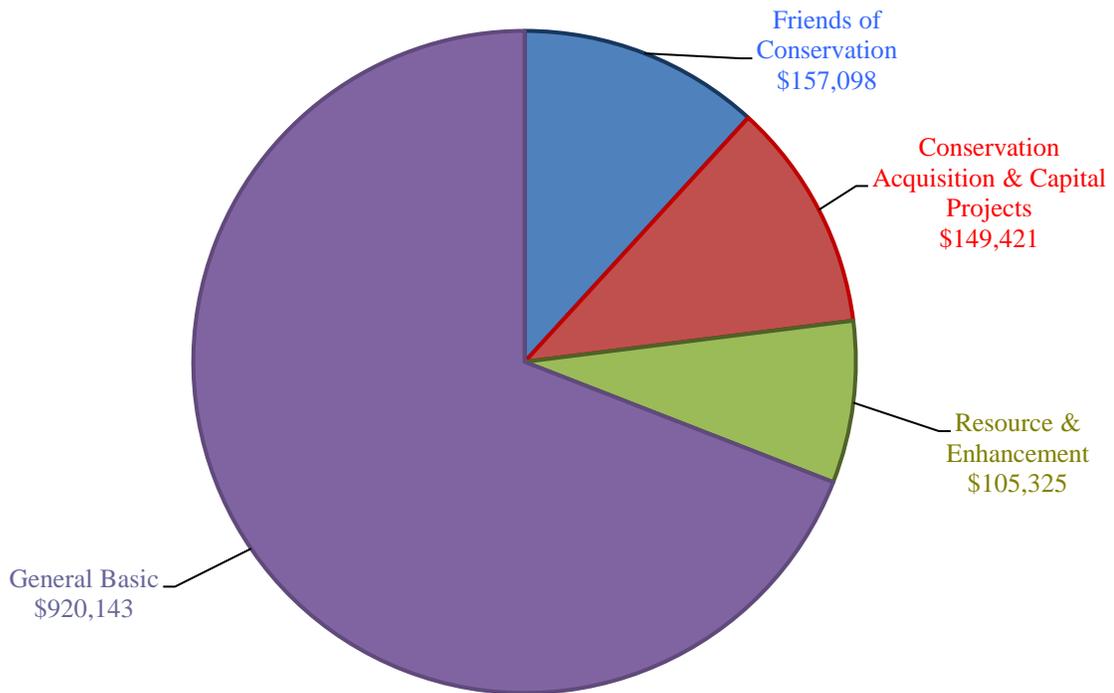
Elizabeth Waage – National Association for Interpretation Heartland Region Secretary; NAI Heartland Region Grants Committee Member

Ryan Wiemold – County Conservation Peace Officers Association Board Member

Jessica Lancial – NAI Heartland Region Awards Committee Member

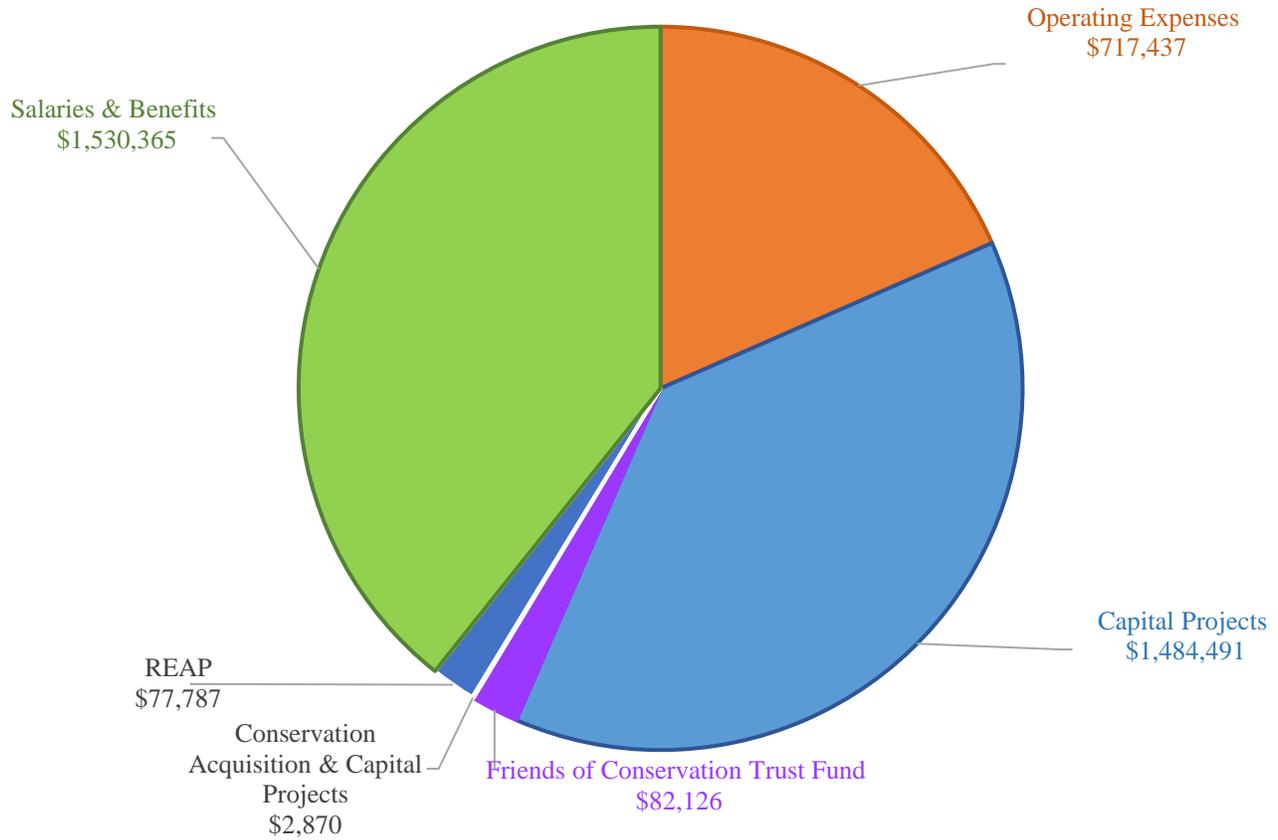
Financial Reports

CONSERVATION REVENUE - FY21 = \$1,331,987



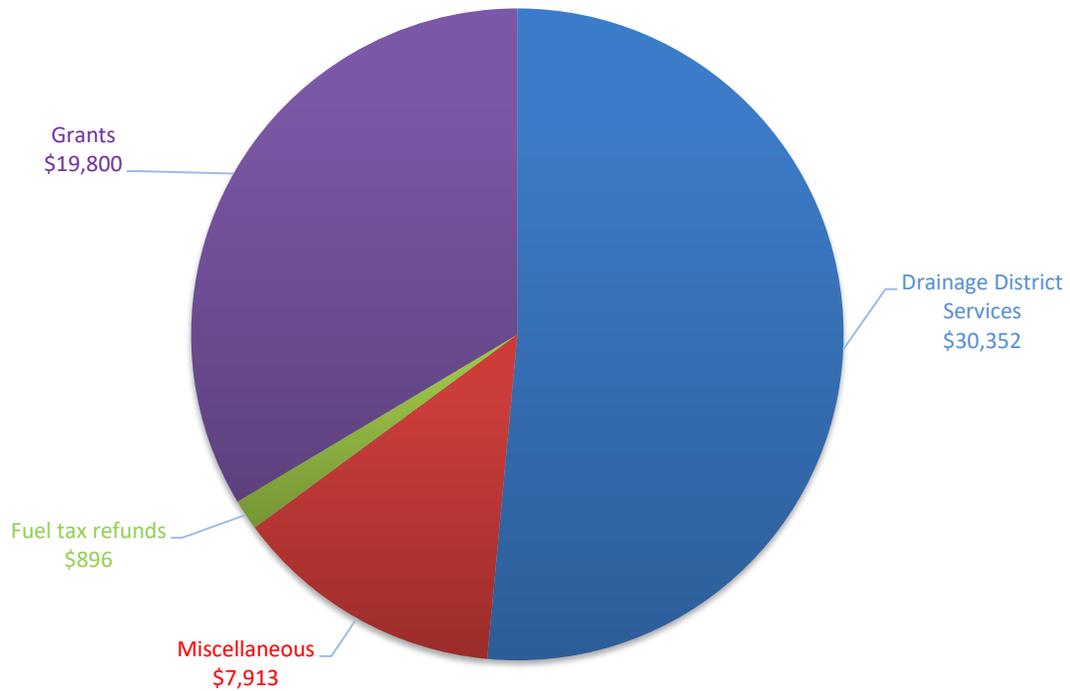
- General Basic – fees, building and equipment rentals, miscellaneous (\$25,136); FEMA (\$9,342); state grants and payments (\$793,552); Derecho damage insurance (\$92,113).
- Friends of Conservation Trust Fund – donations (\$122,718); Partners memberships (\$30,450); interest earned (\$3,930).
- Conservation Acquisition & Capital Projects – camping fees (\$149,421).
- REAP – annual per county and per capita distributions from the state (\$28,445); interest earned (\$456); acquisition grant (\$76,424).

CONSERVATION EXPENDITURES - FY21 = \$3,895,076



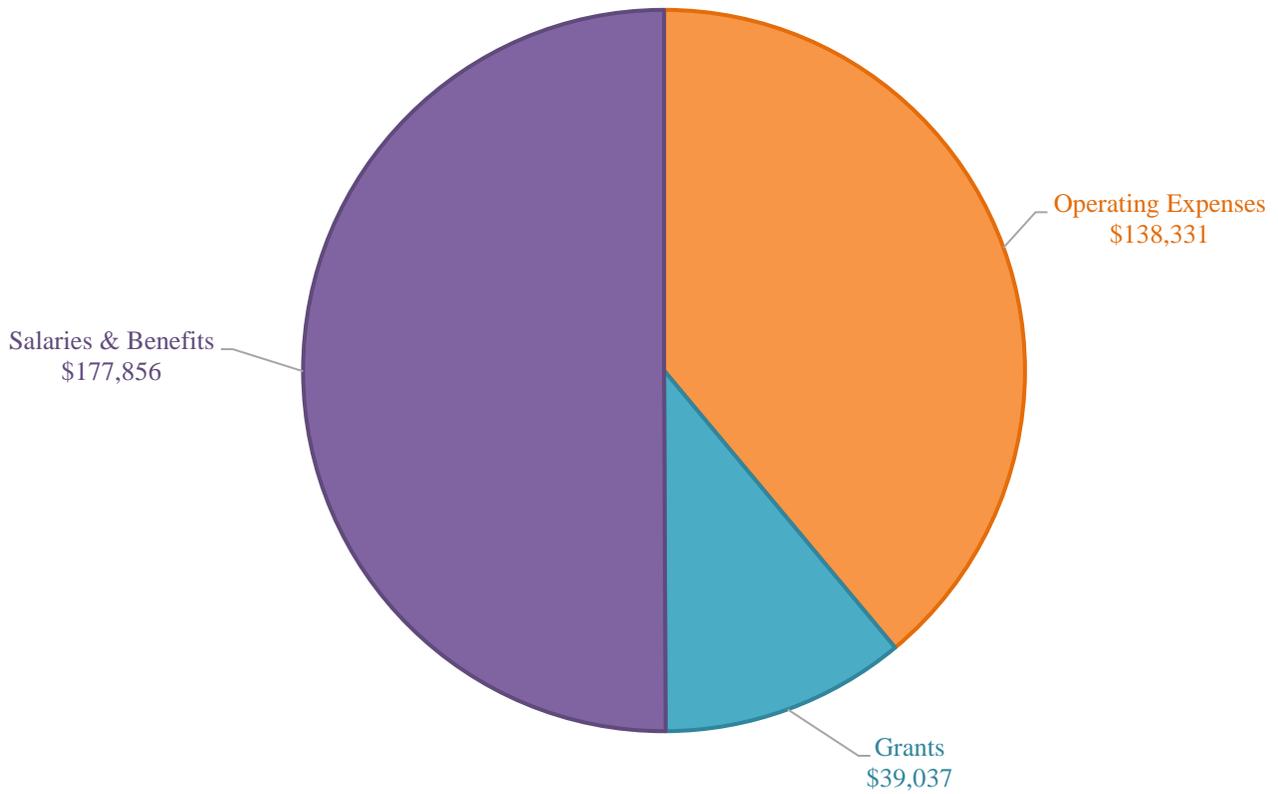
- Salaries & Benefits – 20 full-time and 12 seasonal staff.
- Operating Expenses – shop, office, programming, and recreational supplies; vehicle, building and grounds maintenance; utilities; education and training; new equipment.
- Capital Projects – Oshiem, Ryerson and US Army Corps land acquisitions (\$71,595); Hickory Grove Park asphalt roads, boat ramp and trail to island bridge (\$226,311); McFarland Lake restoration management and design (\$8,889); Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Slater connector (\$103,737); Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Slater kiosk (\$6,656); Praeri Rail Trail extension (\$66,789); McFarland Park entrance sign (\$10,125); Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving (\$990,389).
- Friends of Conservation Trust Fund – land acquisition and appraisals (\$22,585); miscellaneous expenditures from donations and memorials (\$7,469); cost share with the City of Huxley – Heart of Iowa Nature Trail trailhead parking lot (\$52,072).
- REAP – Hickory Grove Park educational kiosks (\$22,325); West Peterson Park entrance monuments (\$24,630); West Peterson Park vault toilet (\$30,832).
- Conservation Acquisition & Capital Projects – refunds given due to COVID-19 & Derecho (\$2,870).

IRVM REVENUE FY21 = \$58,961



- 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 (\$4,073); custom planting and mowing (\$336); sale of fixed assets (\$3,469); other (\$35).
- Fuel tax refund.

IRVM EXPENSES FY21 = \$355,224



- 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 – new equipment purchased through Living Roadway Trust Fund agreements.

FACILITIES REVENUE AND USAGE - FY19-FY21

	FY19	FY20	FY21
Dakins Lake Main Campground Revenue	\$33,603	\$41,558	\$44,840
# camping nights	1,632	1,125	2,752
# people	3,840	2,144	2,234
Dakins Lake Primitive Campground Revenue	\$5,470	\$5,084	\$7,161
# camping nights	388	260	445
# people	908	554	703
Hickory Grove Breezy Bay Campground Revenue	\$53,821	\$48,229	\$93,528
# camping nights	3,660	1,536	4,463
# people	9,779	2,403	4,221
Hickory Grove Primitive Campground Revenue	\$4,052	\$1,731	\$3,197
# camping nights	301	121	280
# people	882	255	418
Miscellaneous Camping Revenue	\$699	\$226	\$695
# camping nights	34	26	50
# people	170	73	162
Total Camping Revenue	\$97,645	\$96,828	\$149,421
Total Camping Nights	6,015	3,068	7,990
Total Number of People	15,579	5,429	7,738
Multipurpose Room Revenue	\$3,945	\$2,080	\$0
# paid rentals	14	5	0
# rentals with fee waived	51	12	0
Dakins Shelter Revenue	\$691	(\$58)	\$550
# reservations	12	9	11
Oriole Ridge Revenue	\$450	\$650	\$1,500
# reservations	6	5	20
Snow Bunting Revenue	\$546	\$0	\$200
# reservations	9	0	4
Total Lodge Revenue	\$1,687	\$592	\$2,250
Firewood Revenue	\$1,210	\$827	\$970
Special Events Permits Revenue	\$225	\$150	\$450
# permits	3	2	6
Boat Rental Revenue	\$1,435	\$0	\$0
# rentals	216	0	0
Waterfront (Concessions) Revenue	\$894	\$0	\$463

Story County Conservation Properties Map

