



FY 24

# ANNUAL REPORT

**Projects Completed**

**McFarland Lake Restoration &  
Soper's Mill Water Trail Access**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>03</b>	At a Glance
<b>04</b>	Introduction
<b>05</b>	Board and Staff
<b>06</b>	Leadership Roles
<b>07</b>	Story County Conservation Properties Map
<b>08</b>	Story County Conservation Parks and Natural Areas Matrix
<b>10</b>	Outdoor Recreation
<b>13</b>	Natural Resources
<b>14</b>	Water Quality
<b>15</b>	Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM)
<b>17</b>	Environmental Education
<b>18</b>	Outreach
<b>19</b>	Volunteers
<b>20</b>	Story County Conservation <i>Partners</i>
<b>21</b>	Grants Awarded
<b>22</b>	Financial Reports

# AT A GLANCE

## Recreation & Projects Story County Conservation



### INTEGRATED ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (IRVM)

- Conservation of right-of-way and drainage ditch maintenance
- 63 miles of drainage ditch management
- Roadway park and prairie management

### OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Story County Conservation owns/manages more than 3,600 acres of public parks and natural areas
- Campgrounds, lakes & beaches, picnic areas, playgrounds, and more
- 89 miles of trails, including the South Skunk River Water Trail
- Over 2,100 acres of public hunting land

### COMPLETED PROJECTS

- McFarland Lake restoration
- McFarland Conservation Center & Hickory Grove Park master plans
- Reservable hunting blind at Sleepy Hollow
- Hickory Grove Park sewer replacement
- New shelters at West Peterson Park
- Soper's Mill water trail access improvements

### CURRENT PROJECTS

- Countywide Trails Master Plan
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving from Cambridge to Collins
- Hickory Grove Park walleye rearing pond
- Prairie Valley Preserve wetland construction

### UPCOMING PROJECTS

- Deppe Family Conservation Area development
- Dakins Lake Cabin
- Hannum's Mill Dam mitigation
- Oxbow restorations on S. Skunk River
- Development at Prairie Valley Preserve

### WATER & NATURAL RESOURCES

- Countywide programs implementing natural resources and water quality improvements
- Multi-jurisdictional initiatives
- Private landowner initiatives
- Water quality monitoring program
- Edge of field water quality projects

### EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- Hundreds of programs for schools, the public, and private groups each year
- Programs for tots to seniors and in all Story County school districts
- Award winning Environmental Education program



**Contact Us**  
515.232.2516



**Conservation Center**  
56461 180th Street, Ames, IA



**Visit us Online**  
[www.storycountyconservation.org](http://www.storycountyconservation.org)



# INTRODUCTION

Story County Conservation has a rich history of excellence in environmental education and in its parks and natural areas. These offerings are only possible due to the community of supporters and expertise offered by members of the community. For decades, the team of staff, supporters, and partners has always worked tirelessly to improve our natural resources and offer the best environmental education and recreational opportunities possible. Recent efforts to address water quality, soil health, and private lands management have increased our capacity to meet our mission - Connecting people with nature and improving our natural resources - making Story County a great place to live, work, and recreate. These recent efforts have built upon the foundations of SCC and have brought more success to the entire family of programs at SCC.

We thank all supporters, whether staff, volunteers, partners, professional service providers, or outdoor enthusiasts. Together, we will continue to make marked improvements to the health of our natural resources and our ability to offer meaningful outdoor engagement.



Mike Cox  
Director, Story County Conservation



Dr. James Pease  
Chair, Story County Conservation Board



# BOARD AND STAFF

## Story County Board of Supervisors

Linda Murken (2019-2026)  
 Lisa Heddens (2019-2026)  
 Latifah Faisal (2021-2024)

## Story County Conservation Board

Ted Tedesco (2009-2023)      Dr. Nancy Franz (2015-2024)  
 Dr. Jim Pease (2011-2025)      Christine Laumer (2017-2026)  
 Craig Meyers (2013-2027)      Erica Place (2024-2028)  
 Linda Murken, ex-officio (2019-2024)

## Story County Conservation Staff

### Administration

Mike Cox, Director  
 Marianne Harrelson, Administrative Coordinator  
 Jessica Paulin, Admin. Assistant

### Field Operations

Sara Carmichael, Watershed Coordinator  
 Brandon Clough, Natural Resource Specialist  
 Russ DeWall, Operations Supervisor  
 Logan Heissel, Park Ranger  
 Kallie Judson, Conservation Technician I  
 Max McCarty, Conservation Technician I  
 Dillon Schmidt, Conservation Technician II  
 Derek Seward, Trails/Natural Resource Technician  
 Pat Shehan, Special Projects Ranger  
 Hunter Simmons, Conservation Technician II  
 Jake Smith, Operations Supervisor  
 Olivia VanderHart, Park Ranger  
 Ryan Wiemold, Park Superintendent

### IRVM

Ty Hamiel, Vegetation Mgmt. Biologist (April 2024 to current)  
 Tyler Kelley, Vegetation Mgmt. Specialist  
 Joe Kooiker, Vegetation Mgmt. Biologist (to March 2024)

### Environmental Education

Bekah Beall Warburton, Naturalist  
 Amber Carpenter, Naturalist  
 Bobbi Donovan, Naturalist  
 Jerry Keys, Environmental Ed. Coordinator  
 Madi Nolte, Outreach/Community Engagement Coordinator  
 Clair Pfantz, Naturalist

### Seasonal Employees - 2023

Becca Baird	Paige Higby
Hagen Carter	Dillon Nicholson
Dylan Fahey	Alexandra Oglesby
Mikaila Frost	Jacob Reischauer
McKayla Gartner	Mattie Sheckles
Hunter Glass	Fletcher Stiers
Sarah Gnade	

### Seasonal Employees - 2024

Lane Danielson	Dillon Nicholson
Alexandra Ellsworth	Jacob Reischauer
McKayla Gartner	Emily Rober
Sarah Gnade	Carter Ross
Paige Higby	Ethan See
Hunter Hughlette	Nadia Snow
William Johnson	Makenzie Stewart
Shelby Mielke	Jacob Sutton



**Bekah Beall** - Iowa Association of Naturalists - Joe Halbur Scholarship Committee Member

**Sara Carmichael** - Headwaters of the South Skunk River, Four Mile Creek, and Ioway Creek Watershed Management Authority Alternate; Iowa Rivers Revival Board Member

**Brandon Clough** - Bird Friendly Iowa Scoring Committee Member; Izaak Walton League Wildlife Habitat Improvement Survey Committee Member

**Mike Cox** - County Conservation Director's Association Professional Development Committee Member

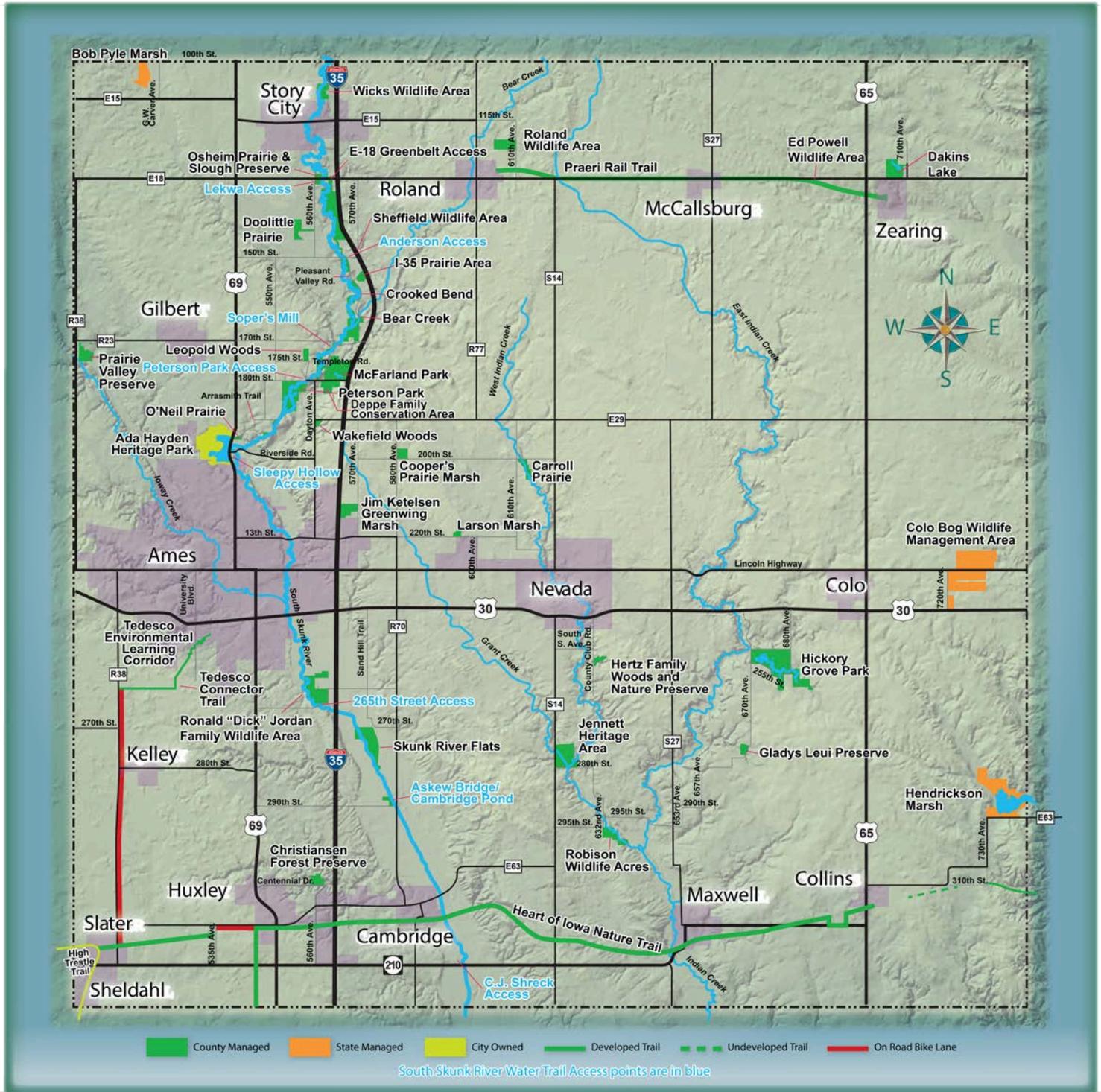
**Bobbi Donovan** - Iowa Association of Naturalists Awards Committee Member; Iowa Association of Naturalists Executive Committee - Office at Large; Iowa County Conservation Systems Board of Directors

**Pat Shehan** - County Conservation Peace Officers Association Executive Committee Member; District 1 Fish Habitat Stamp Grant Committee Chairperson; Statewide REAP Grant Review Committee Member

**Olivia VanderHart** - Story County Sheriff's Office Drone Team Member

**Ryan Wiemold** - County Conservation Peace Officers Association President; High Trestle Trail Advisory Committee Member

# CONSERVATION PROPERTIES MAP





# PARKS & AREA AMENITIES

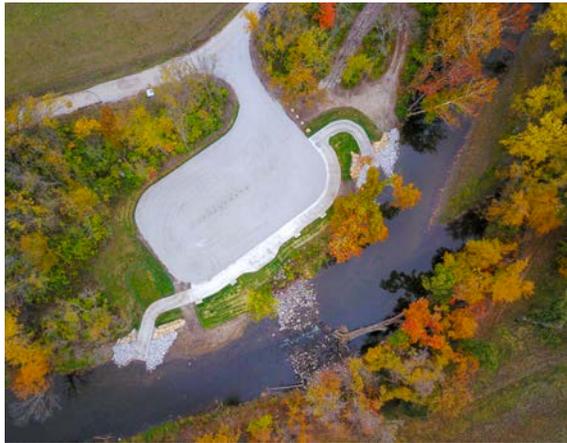
ACRES: **P**rairie **W**etland **Wo**odland  
 CAMPSITES: **E**lectric **W**ater **S**eptric/  
**N**on-**E**lectric/**Y**outh **D**ump **S**tation/**R**emote  
**W**ATER: **D**rinking **S**howers  
**T**OILETS: **F**lush/**P**ortable (seasonal)  
**S**HELTER: **E**nclosed **O**pen/**R**ental/**F**ree  
**P**ICNICKING  
**T**RAILS: **H**iking **E**questrian/**M**t. **B**ike/  
**B**ike-**L**imestone/**S**nowmobile **W**ater  
**S**WIMMING: **B**each  
**F**ISHING: **P**ier/**J**etty/**L**ake(acres)/**S**tream  
**B**OATING: **C**anoe/**E**lectric/**B**oat **R**ental/  
**R**amp  
**R**ECREATION: **A**rchery **P**layground/  
**H**UNTING: **W**etland/**F**orest/**O**upland

<b>265th Street Access</b> 56091 265th Street, Ames, 50010	1 acre								W		S	C		
<b>Anderson Access</b> 56743 150th Street, Story City, 50248	Wo 2 acres								W		S	C		
<b>Askew Bridge/Cambridge Pond</b> 57887 290th Street, Cambridge, 50046	P, W 26.5 acres								H.5, W		L4, S	C		W, U
<b>Bear Creek</b> 16415 Pleasant Valley Road, Story City, 50248	Wo 123 acres								H1.87, M1.87		S			F
<b>C.J. Shreck Access</b> 59627 Highway 210, Cambridge, 50046	3 acres								W		S	C		
<b>Carroll Prairie</b> 61250 200th Street, Nevada, 50201	P 49 acres													U
<b>Christiansen Forest Preserve</b> 55973 310th Street, Huxley, 50124	P, Wo 49 acres								H1.5, M1.5					
<b>Cooper's Prairie Marsh</b> 58249 200th Street, Nevada, 50201	W, P 40 acres													W, U
<b>Crooked Bend</b> 15997 Pleasant Valley Road, Story City, 50248	Wo 66 acres										S			F
<b>Dakins Lake</b> 70613 130th Street, Zearing, 50278	P, W 101 acres	E10, EW17, EWS13, Y1, D	D, S	F, P	OR1	P		H1.5, M.5		P, J, L20		C, E, R	P	
<b>Doolittle Prairie</b> 14249 560th Avenue, Story City, 50248	W, P 43 acres				P									*U
<b>E-18 Greenbelt Access</b> 56342 130th Street, Story City, 50248	W, P, Wo 210 acres							H2.5, E2.5, M2.5						F, U
<b>Ed Powell Wildlife Area</b> 68328 130th Street, Zearing, 50278	P 17 acres													U
<b>Gladys Leui Preserve</b> 27371 670th Avenue, Maxwell, 50161	P, Wo 25 acres													
<b>Heart of Iowa Nature Trail</b> Runs parallel to Hwy 210 from Slater to Melbourne	W, P, Wo 394 acres						P	H21.5, E21.5, L21.5, S21.5						U
<b>Hertz Family Woods and Nature Preserve</b> 25401 Country Club Road, Nevada, 50201	W, P, Wo 21.54 acres													
<b>Hickory Grove Park</b> 67382 250th Street, Colo, 50056	P, Wo 445 acres	E43, N11, Y1, D	D, S	F, P	ER2, OF5	P		H4	B	P, J, L98		C, E, BR, R	A, P	W, F, U
<b>I-35 Prairie Area</b> 15233 Interstate Highway 35, Story City, 50248	P, Wo 23.47 acres							H.25						
<b>Jennett Heritage Area</b> 62321 280th Street, Nevada, 50201	P, W, Wo 171 acres							H.5, M.5		L2.5, S				W, F, U
<b>Jim Ketelsen Greenwing Marsh</b> 21163 570th Avenue, Ames, 50010	W, P 68 acres							H1.72, M1.72						W, U



# OUTDOOR RECREATION

The restoration of McFarland Lake has been completed. This project involved in-lake restoration efforts to mechanically remove excess sediment and phosphorus. Two forebays were installed to capture sediment and nutrients before they entered the lake, and measures were taken to stabilize the lake shoreline in order to reduce sediment delivery. A new drainage pipe has been added to facilitate a full lake drawdown when maintenance is necessary, which will also aid in better management of the fishery and lake vegetation. Improvements to the fishery and angling opportunities included the installation of five pea gravel spawning benches, four fishing nodes, two rock piles, and various volunteer-built habitat features. Additionally, a new fishing jetty with ADA access has been constructed. To enhance accessibility, a zero-grade access point for canoes and kayaks was created, and the lake level was raised by one foot, restoring it to its original depth of 26 feet. Educational panels highlighting the lake restoration and fishery are planned to be installed in FY24.



The Soper's Mill Water Trail Access Improvement Project has been completed. Two launch sites, above and below the riffle, have been installed to provide paddlers with excellent access points to the Skunk River. Additionally, this location features ample parking for multiple trucks and trailers, as well as interpretive panels that educate visitors about the river system and the rich history of this site.

McFarland Shop had design engineering completed to demo and build a new shop. Staff and operations have outgrown the existing outdated structure. The original shop was built in 1985 and housed two full time and one seasonal employee. The McFarland field staff now sits at five full time and three seasonal employees with considerably more equipment and scope of services. This demolition and construction project is anticipated for 2024.



SCC's newest property, Prairie Valley Preserve, had a trail roughed in and developed around the property. This is for Phase 1 development of this site. A future picnic shelter and wetland project are planned for property along with future trail connections to additional neighborhood phases.



SCC started a Trails Master Plan to chart the course for Story County trails over the next decade and beyond. Open houses were held throughout the county, as well as, online information and opinion gathering option. The final plan is expected to be completed in FY25 and will assist in prioritizing and planning trail initiatives.



The sewer line project at HGP was contracted, and work began to connect the park to Colo's lagoon. This will allow for future expansion of facilities, as the original lagoon was outdated and at capacity.

SCC campgrounds switched to QR codes for checking out sites and reservations. This online feature has reduced staff time significantly and makes for a seamless experience for users.

Campground electrical pedestals were updated at HGP to better accommodate modern campers and reduce electrical issues.



RentFun stations were installed at HGP and Dakins Lake. These amenities allow park users to rent a kayak or paddle board through an online app. Each site hosts four vessels.



Kayak launches were installed at Hickory Grove South Boat Ramp, West Peterson Park and Dakins Lake. This project also featured an ADA launch at HGP's north boat ramp. These amenities became more desirable as paddling use has greatly increased on SCC lakes in recent years.

A beach sand cleaning machine was purchased and used at Hickory Grove beach to groom the sand and remove debris and goose droppings. This is anticipated to have a positive effect on E.coli readings from the beach water samples which have been attributed to the heavy goose traffic in the area. Numerous other goose deterrents are regularly enforced to help as well.



HGP amenity signs were designed, which will highlight use areas for park users to identify locations within the park. These are planned to be installed in 2025.

A security fence was installed around the HPG shop area to limit exposure to the facility and equipment housed at the park.



The Sleepy Hollow reservable hunting blind was installed for youth and disabled bow hunters. This project allows hunters to participate from a slightly elevated and enclosed hunting blind. Staff installed food plots and performed natural resource restorations on the site to maximize hunting opportunities and improve the wildlife habitat.

A MOTUS antenna was installed at Colo-NESCO school, near Dakins Lake, which allows for radio tracking of migration patterns on wildlife. Data and information from this is provided free to the public online.



Staff set up an information stand at the Slater Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT) trailhead during RAGBRAI as it passed through Slater. On that day, staff engaged with thousands of cyclists to educate them about SCC trails and properties while providing refreshments. This day marked the busiest in RAGBRAI history, with an estimated 50,000 riders participating!



Phase 3 of the HOINT began with construction between the Skunk River bridge by Cambridge and County Road S-14. This 3-mile section was shaped, had drainage improvements installed, and was paved. This project had CIRPTA funding as a match.

Staff coordinated with Iowa DOT for the HOINT tunnel under I-35. This project featured interpretive artwork on the tunnel walls to resemble monarch butterflies, as I-35 is known as the "Monarch Highway."



Phase 4-6 of the HOINT had engineering design completed. This effort is part of the larger Destination Iowa project which will pave another nine miles from Highway S-14 to Collins and also feature amenity improvements. It is anticipated this project will be completed in late 2024. This will bring the HOINT in Story County to 19 miles of paved trail (including 1.3 miles on the Huxley E-63 bike lanes).

Hertz Family Woods and Nature Preserve had additional tile issues repaired on the site. Previous tile maintenance repairs had been completed on site over the past few years. Tile let downs into the stream from the surrounding higher elevation agricultural fields around the site were needed to reduce erosion.

Staff created a new interactive map for the website showcasing all SCC managed areas.

## Park Use Counts

*Calculated with data from 2023 -2024*

Trail Counter Location	Annual Counts		Change from 22-23	Confidence (% year w/ data)	Counter/Location Notes
HOINT Slater	18,036		(888)	86%	HOINT had construction on Phases 3-6
HOINT Huxley	10,503		1,813	29%	partial year, as counter was moved
Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor	38,013		693	100%	
Hickory Grove North Boat Ramp	18,612		4,769	100%	lake filled in winter of 2023

Park Vehicle Counts	Annual Vehicles	Est. Visitors (x 2.5)	Change from 22-23	Confidence (% year w/ data)	Counter/Location Notes
Dakins East Entrance	19,571	48,928	(7,985)	77%	
Hickory Grove Main Entrance	62,309	155,773	33,965	59%	partial year, had to replace counter
West Peterson Park Entrance	38,644	96,610	(4,903)	77%	

1. all data assumes the counters are collecting data at a 100% accurate rate)

2. the counter's program automatically does the tricky math required to correctly handle days, weeks, or months with incomplete data. When new data is uploaded and assigned to a counter's site, the program automatically adjusts for more accurate summary numbers by using analytics (daily trends, monthly averages, etc.)

# NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources Stewards volunteered for a total of 607 hrs. Bob Hartzler was recognized at our annual Supporters Dinner for his outstanding commitment to the Natural Resources Stewards program, and Brad Mosses for stewarding the goat herd and other tasks at Christiansen Forest Preserve.

SCC entered a new farm lease partnership with Nevada FFA including row crop, haying, and grazing at Hickory Grove Park.

Bioassessments were performed by the State Hygienic Lab at West Indian Creek at Carroll Prairie to gather baseline data for those locations. Staff is also performing natural resource work at those location in an effort to improve the water quality and habitat.



SCC placed 3rd for counties over 30,000 population for the ICCS Habitat Award.

Staff hosted tree plantings with volunteers at Hickory Grove, McFarland and Soper's Mill.



SCC hosted several Conservation Corps of Iowa (CCI) groups and worked on the following projects:

- Jennett Heritage Area – tree removal on remnant, oxbow restoration
- Jordan Wildlife Area – timber stand improvement
- Praeri Rail Trail – tree removal (funded by Urban Renewal Fund)
- Robison Wildlife Acres – timber stand improvement
- Christiansen Forest Preserve – savanna restoration
- Deppe Family Conservation Area – derecho clean-up
- Mound Cemetery – brush removal – funded by the Iowa Native Plant Society

## Natural Resource Statistics for FY24

- Planted 42 acre of prairie
- Conducted 288 acres of prescribed fires (including a public evening burn at TELC)
- Prairie maintenance mowing totaling 76 acres
- Hayed 95 acres as a restoration tool
- Grazed 45 acres
- Timber stand improvements on 11 acres (by staff and volunteers)
- Harvested 260 lbs. of bulk combine seed and 62 lbs. of hand harvest seed

# WATER QUALITY



Story County Conservation worked with Prairie Rivers of Iowa to publish the third annual report highlighting water quality efforts. The monitoring program included 49 volunteers collecting almost 1,000 data points, low dissolved oxygen at over half of the stream sites, and sites downstream of sewage treatment plants seeing elevated chloride and phosphate levels. The positives that we have seen include lower nitrate levels in the South Skunk River compared to the pre-2014 baseline period and high scores for sensitive insects seen during bioassessments.

Staff hosted a macroinvertebrate training for four volunteers at Brookside Park in Ames.

A bioassessment on West Indian Creek at Carroll Prairie was completed.

A Streambank Mitigation Bank Feasibility Study was completed.

During the Watershed Management Authority Day at the Capitol, Supervisor Linda Murken and Watershed Coordinator Sara Carmichael spoke to elected officials about the importance of water quality.

Staff also presented at Wild Women of the Woods, county Farm Bureau, Conference of Land Improvement Contractors of America, ISU Women's Landowner Event.



A river clean-up was coordinated in spring 2024 that stretched 3.5 miles along the Skunk River. Sixteen volunteers picked up 2,100 lbs of trash. Partners for the event included Prairie Rivers of Iowa, Outdoor Alliance of Story County, Skunk River Paddlers, and City of Ames.

An ISALT training was hosted for Story County employees and contractors that apply salt during winter months. One of the biggest takeaways is how to salt properly at home.



**Shovel**

Clear walkways before snow turns to ice.



**Scatter**

A 12oz mug of salt is enough to treat a 20 foot long driveway, 10 sidewalk squares, or 2 parking spaces.



**Sweep**

Sweep up excess salt and reuse.

The Edge of Field 'batch and build' program is working to get more saturated buffers and bioreactors in the ground has successfully continued, going into year three. Year two practices are in the final design phase and will be installed next fiscal year. They include 17 practices, treating 20 outlets on seven properties. For year three, 12 different properties will be surveyed. Multiple partners are involved including City of Ames, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and Natural Resource Conservation Service.

# INTEGRATED ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (IRVM)

Completed 147 work orders and planted 36 acres in roadsides at 164 different roadside sites. Additionally, 16 acres were custom planted by staff.

Contractors sprayed 463 miles for brush in LaFayette, Howard, Warren, Lincoln, Milford, Franklin, Richland and Sherman Townships. Several site distance issues at driveways and intersections were mechanically cut by staff.

Staff sprayed 305 centerline miles of roadsides with herbicide to address invasive weed concerns. Staff sprayed 46 guardrail sites and 23 miles of shoulders to control emerging vegetation in gravel. 31 miles of brush was sprayed in sensitive areas.

Two seed nurseries produced 344 pounds of usable prairie seed. Hand-harvested forbs from volunteer events and SCC staff collections increased the diversity of the seed harvested by combines. 62 lbs. of hand-harvested seed from 14 species were collected.



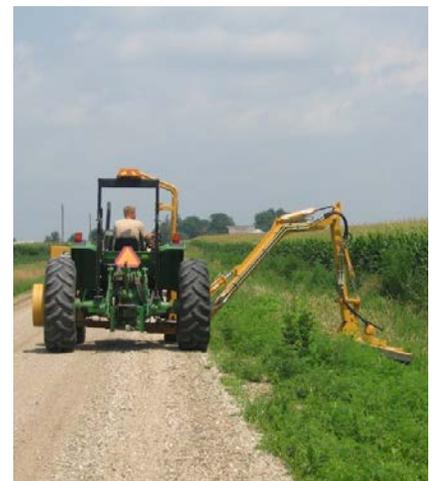
Seeding equipment was rented by 30 landowners/operators. Approximately 268 acres were planted to natives and cool-season species.



Staff burned 4 roadsides for a total of 6 acres and one private seed nursery for a total of 4.5 acres.

Staff mowed 27 acres in several natural areas and roadsides as part of planting maintenance.

Staff responded to 9 noxious weed complaints.



Community involvement included presentations for Trees Forever, Stewards of the Beautiful Land, and Big Bluestem Audubon Society. Nasties of Nature presentations were given to Secondary Roads staff.

Staff served on SCC Safety Committee. Vice President for Association for Integrated Roadside Management. Secretary for Iowa Weed Commissioner's Association.

## IRVM FIELD OPERATIONS COMPARISON BY FISCAL YEAR

	FY24	FY23	FY22
Work Orders Completed	147	124	125
Roadside Plantings (sites)	164	71	114
Roadside Plantings (acres)	36.25	30	35
Custom Plantings (sites)		8	2
Custom Plantings (acres)	16	43	36
Conservation/Other Plantings (sites)	7	0	2
Conservation/Other Plantings (acres)	11.1	0	5
Roadside Burns (sites)	4	12	10
Roadside Burns (acres)	5.75	25	9
Roadside Weeds Sprayed (miles)	305	195	231
Foliar Brush Sprayed (miles)	34	31	29
Equipment Rentals (landowners)	30	31	19
Equipment Rentals (acres)	268	250	278
Pounds of Seed Harvested	344	402	731
Volunteer Hours	86	81	42
Drainage District (amount billed)	\$0	\$842.89	\$8,255.47
Drainage District Revenue Received	\$0	\$5,034.79	\$9,937.88

**Story County roadside prairie**





# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The team conducted 1,000 education and outreach programs resulting in 26,595 contacts through 589 indoor presentations, 381 outdoor experiences, 15 service learning opportunities and 15 co-sponsored events. Indoor presentations average about an hour long and usually for one classroom (25 students) at a time. Outdoor experiences average about two hours long and for two classrooms (25 students) at one time.



Several crafting programs were held this year - felting, nature jewelry, wood burning, pine needle baskets, and a painting in the park series.

SCC held their first rain barrel making workshop. The program was so successful that two programs are planned for next spring.

A series of wellness programs called *Being In Nature* were held at Christiansen Forest Preserve.



SCC partnered with Prairie Rivers of Iowa and other groups to hold Monarch Magic at Ada Hayden Heritage Park in September 2023 educating hundreds of people about monarch butterflies.

Story County has been recognized as a Bird Friendly county through Bird Friendly Iowa. In August 2023 Story County gained High Flier Status.

## Climate Change and Environmental Health

“Green” themed article/graphic in county’s monthly employee newsletter by Bekah Beall.

Composting is now part of all school field trip lunches at McFarland Park.



## DEI Efforts

Accessibility statements are included on program fliers when necessary. For example: “Accessibility: Program activities will take place on mowed grass or in the nature center. The short hike will occur on a paved or mowed trail.”

We have arranged programs in collaboration with The ARC of Story County, which supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Additionally, we have set up programs with All Aboard for Kids Camp: STEM, which is designed for children on the autism spectrum. A field trip was organized at McFarland Park for the All Aboard for Kids Camp: Express, catering to individuals with higher needs.

Over the summer, volunteers and staff attended eight community events.



# OUTREACH

## Prairie Horizons

The quarterly *Prairie Horizons* newsletter provides project updates, an events calendar, and more. More than 2,000 households receive this via mail (4.5% increase) and 1,100 subscribers receive the digital version (5% increase). Roughly 450 copies are hand-delivered by volunteers to local businesses, waiting rooms, libraries, and more.



## Community Outreach

Expanding SCC's visibility and community presence was emphasized, with SCC attending more community festivals than in recent years. The event booths included children's activities, informational materials, free stickers, newsletter sign-ups, and more.

**12 Events, 865 Contacts**

## Social Media Platforms

SCC actively uses Facebook and Instagram to provide organizational and project updates, promote events, and more. Strategizing Facebook content has led to impressive growth in engagement and following, even with a decrease in content (see below).

Instagram's growth remains minimal, with roughly 2,000 followers.

*\*Reach counts distribution of our FB content (posts, stories, events, etc.) as well as the reach from other sources (tags, check-ins, and page visits).*

## Facebook Highlights - FY24

Reach  
**201.3K**  
↑ 5.4%

Content Interactions  
**15K** ↑ 28.4%

Posts  
**304** ↓ 31.5%

Followers  
**7.1k** ↑ 15.1%



# VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are integral in attaining SCC’s mission. Volunteers’ hours logged in FY24 included: serving on the Story County Conservation Board, cleaning parks through the Adopt-A-Park program, water quality monitoring, invasive species removal, trail maintenance, delivering newsletters, assisting with environmental education programs, and much more.

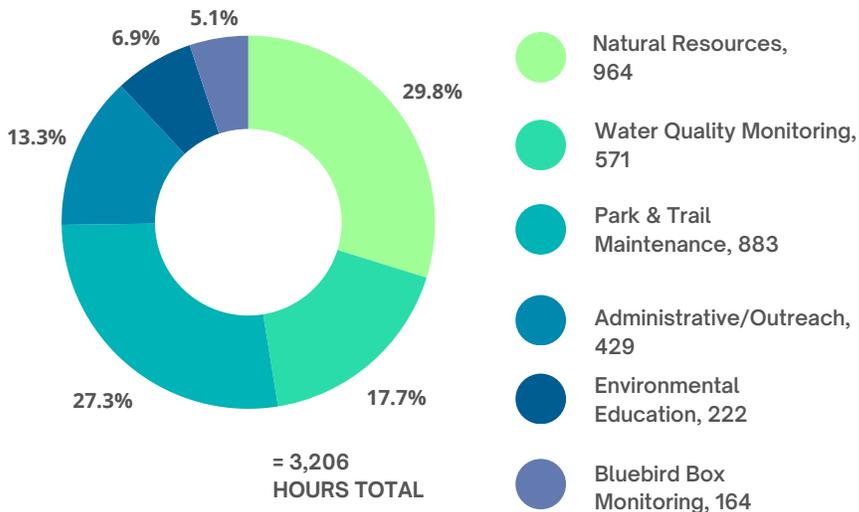


A growing number of organization- and workplace- based volunteer workdays were hosted and led by SCC staff. Engaged groups include Workiva, Zearing Fire Department, ISU Conservation Club, Greater Iowa Credit Union, Back Country Hunters and Anglers of Iowa and more for a total of more than 200 group volunteer hours. Group projects have ranged from honeysuckle removal, to tree plantings, to planting prairie plugs at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor.

Many individuals, clubs, and families are engaged with the Water Quality Monitoring program, currently in its fourth year of a 10-year plan. In all, 41 volunteers plus six SCC staff monitor 61 sites and put in 571 hours total in FY24.

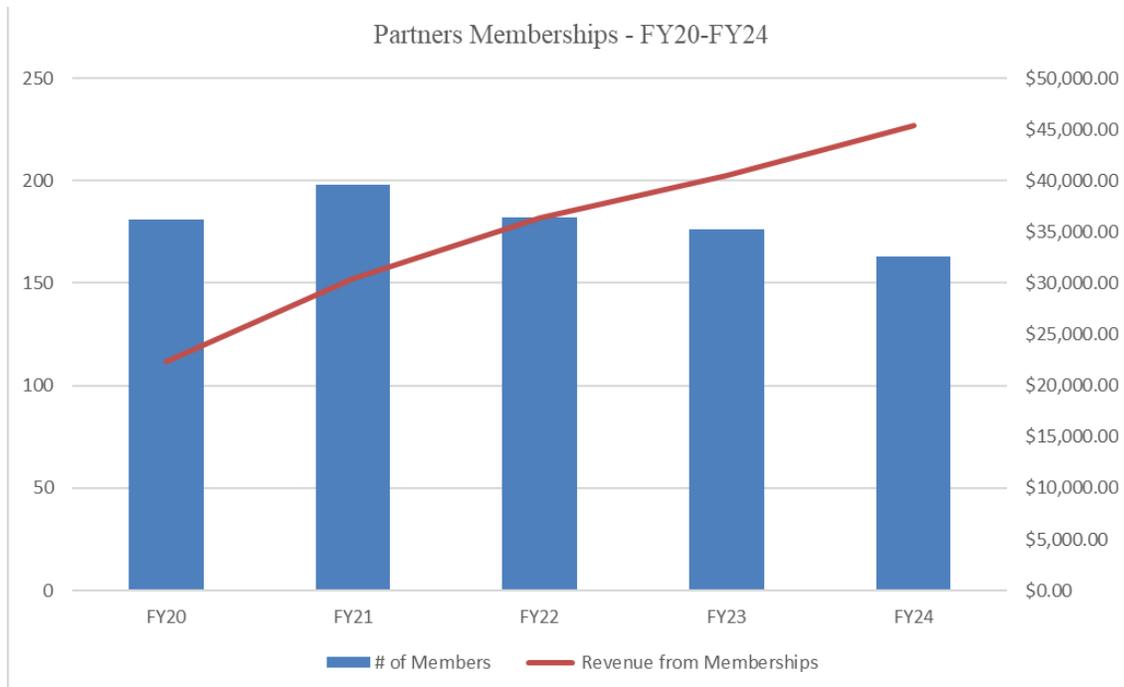
Volunteers logged a total of 3,206 hours in FY24. This is a 24% increase from hours donated the previous fiscal year. Using the Independent Sector volunteer service value of \$28.88 per hour (IA), volunteers provided \$92,589.28 of service to SCC in FY24.

## VOLUNTEER HOURS



# 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* members raised a record-breaking \$45,438.00 towards the purchase of the Deppe property. This 124-acre property is located immediately south of McFarland Park.



**Aerial view of the Deppe property**





# GRANTS RECEIVED

The following grants and agreements were awarded in FY24. Expenditures and reimbursements may occur in the year awarded or over several years.

<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Iowa Department of Natural Resources - Urban Species of Greatest Conservation Need Wildlife Grant - State Wildlife Grant Competitive	Prairie Valley and Tedesco Habitat Management	\$15,740
Iowa Department of Natural Resources - Community Forestry Grant	Hickory Grove Tree Planting	\$2,528
Iowa Department of Transportation - Living Roadways Trust Fund	Rotary Mower	\$2,330
Iowa Department of Transportation - Living Roadways Trust Fund	Prescribed Fire PPE	\$503
Iowa Department of Transportation - Living Roadways Trust Fund	Wireless Headsets	\$1,110
Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Preserves Board	Doolittle Prairie Pothole Wetlands	\$2,000
<b>Total Grants/Agreements - FY24</b>		<b>\$24,211</b>



# FINANCIAL REPORTS

## CONSERVATION BUDGET

REVENUE			
General Basic	FY24	FY23	FY22
Building Rent	\$ 4,095.00	\$ 4,057.50	\$ 3,687.50
Miscellaneous	\$ 4,393.95	\$ 1,596.37	\$ 8,004.29
Sale of Assets	\$ 63,300.00	\$ 6,500.00	\$ -
FEMA	\$ 3,634.50	\$ 7,269.01	\$ 65,420.98
State Payments	\$ 118.32	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ 16,683.80	\$ 43,435.00	\$ 295,793.32
Environmental Education Fees	\$ 27,385.25	\$ 22,774.52	\$ 22,302.63
Boat Rental	\$ 46.80	\$ 1,300.00	\$ -
Recreational Facilities Rentals	\$ 2,900.00	\$ 2,925.00	\$ 2,546.00
Other Recreational Fees (Concessions)	\$ 144.50	\$ 991.30	\$ 364.75
Land Rent	\$ 27.77	\$ 27.77	\$ 27.77
Donations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00
Firewood	\$ 895.50	\$ 1,396.00	\$ 916.00
Fuel Tax Refund	\$ 3,249.00	\$ 2,876.13	\$ 2,790.18
Boat Titling Fees	\$ 850.00	\$ 1,010.00	\$ 1,105.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 127,724.39</b>	<b>\$ 96,158.60</b>	<b>\$ 403,958.42</b>
<b>REAP</b>			
Interest	\$ 3,168.14	\$ 1,478.75	\$ 348.78
REAP Funds	\$ 32,107.00	\$ 29,093.00	\$ 28,725.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 35,275.14</b>	<b>\$ 30,571.75</b>	<b>\$ 29,073.78</b>
<b>CONSERVATION RESERVE</b>			
Camping Fees	\$ 182,112.25	\$ 180,151.64	\$ 164,682.70
Grants	\$ 150,112.50	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 332,224.75</b>	<b>\$ 180,151.64</b>	<b>\$ 164,682.70</b>
<b>TRUST FUND</b>			
Interest	\$ 32,033.97	\$ 13,119.68	\$ 3,221.86
Donations	\$ 185,867.19	\$ 203,127.23	\$ 145,319.77
Miscellaneous	\$ 630.00	\$ -	\$ -
Easements	\$ -	\$ 1,283.70	\$ -
Grants	\$ 200,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 418,531.16</b>	<b>\$ 217,530.61</b>	<b>\$ 148,541.63</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 913,755.44</b>	<b>\$ 524,412.60</b>	<b>\$ 746,256.53</b>

<b>EXPENSES</b>			
	FY24	FY23	FY22
<b>SALARIES &amp; WAGES</b>			
Permanent Staff	\$ 1,290,213.11	\$ 1,269,792.27	\$ 1,075,994.17
Temporary - Seasonal Staff	\$ 104,294.52	\$ 103,196.61	\$ 91,656.62
Overtime	\$ 1,684.19	\$ 864.89	\$ 2,181.46
Payroll Expenses/Benefits	\$ 554,675.75	\$ 540,560.14	\$ 460,156.86
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 1,950,867.57</b>	<b>\$ 1,914,413.91</b>	<b>\$ 1,629,989.11</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			
Conservation Board	\$ 1,932.05	\$ 2,015.83	\$ 1,436.30
Shop Supplies	\$ 13,183.91	\$ 10,277.95	\$ 9,140.88
Environmental Education	\$ 34,363.72	\$ 29,472.71	\$ 39,170.86
Custodial Supplies	\$ 4,865.65	\$ 4,567.71	\$ 6,174.08
Conservation Center Equipment Parts and Supplies	\$ 20,936.37	\$ 13,345.34	\$ 13,387.57
Vehicle Fuels and Maintenance	\$ 100,133.61	\$ 120,581.70	\$ 90,184.65
Office/Administration	\$ 17,355.97	\$ 10,450.46	\$ 13,326.10
FEMA	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,673.81
Recreational Supplies	\$ 31,157.93	\$ 1,387.14	\$ 3,039.15
Uniforms and Equipment	\$ 9,762.14	\$ 11,978.51	\$ 19,866.80
Health and Safety	\$ 6,176.04	\$ 6,037.92	\$ 7,227.46
Volunteer Management	\$ 5,521.71	\$ 5,020.35	\$ 3,593.89
Marketing	\$ 6,305.46	\$ 8,580.59	\$ 9,976.88
Postage and Mailings	\$ 3,086.28	\$ 2,976.28	\$ 2,564.64
Communication Services	\$ 29,392.47	\$ 29,164.27	\$ 26,992.04
Staff Education and Training	\$ 11,007.08	\$ 19,688.34	\$ 23,247.80
Utilities	\$ 64,464.92	\$ 61,705.64	\$ 61,711.48
Grounds Maintenance	\$ 152,170.90	\$ 85,511.90	\$ 163,584.87
Building Maintenance	\$ 109,514.16	\$ 71,442.67	\$ 79,741.41
Equipment Rent/Maintenance	\$ 3,776.87	\$ 3,546.14	\$ 5,983.59
Contractual Labor	\$ 219,229.35	\$ 143,820.87	\$ 67,928.57
Taxes, Leases, and Easements	\$ 2,403.41	\$ 782.67	\$ 504.00
Equipment and Machinery Purchases	\$ 235,986.99	\$ 125,034.04	\$ 111,597.50
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 1,082,726.99</b>	<b>\$ 767,389.03</b>	<b>\$ 769,054.33</b>
<b>CAPITAL EXPENSES</b>			
Land Acquisition	\$ 42,125.00	\$ 25,000.00	
Buildings & Equipment	\$ 633,418.98	\$ 303,835.85	\$ 213,581.75
Heart of Iowa Nature Trail	\$ 20,997.40	\$ 78,498.79	\$ 96,027.30
Grants	\$ 151,229.90	\$ 12,842.10	\$ 25,669.85
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 847,771.28</b>	<b>\$ 420,176.74</b>	<b>\$ 335,278.90</b>
<b>REAP</b>			
Land Acquisition	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Buildings & Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Expenditures	\$ 14,374.24	\$ 57,827.05	\$ -
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 14,374.24</b>	<b>\$ 57,827.05</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>CONSERVATION RESERVE</b>			
Land Acquisition	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00
Buildings & Equipment	\$ 295,768.80	\$ 4,200.00	\$ -
Other Expenditures	\$ 3,020.21	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ 67,300.00	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 366,089.01</b>	<b>\$ 4,200.00</b>	<b>\$ 10,000.00</b>
<b>TRUST FUND</b>			
Land Acquisition	\$ 250,709.75	\$ 34,250.00	\$ 42,125.00
Buildings & Equipment		\$ 21,958.50	\$ 13,302.70
Other Expenditures	\$ 18,754.00	\$ 24,271.39	\$ 65,411.48
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 269,463.75</b>	<b>\$ 80,479.89</b>	<b>\$ 120,839.18</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL ALL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 4,531,292.84</b>	<b>\$ 3,244,486.62</b>	<b>\$ 2,865,161.52</b>

<b>IRVM</b>			
<b>BUDGET EXPENDITURES</b>			
	FY24	FY23	FY22
<b>SALARIES &amp; WAGES</b>			
Permanent Staff	\$ 120,371.43	\$ 122,626.55	\$ 110,634.35
Temporary - Seasonal Staff	\$ 27,896.28	\$ 24,665.52	\$ 21,062.32
Overtime	\$ -	\$ 49.31	\$ 88.31
Payroll Expenses/Benefits	\$ 37,402.31	\$ 38,555.63	\$ 35,836.27
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 185,670.02</b>	<b>\$ 185,897.01</b>	<b>\$ 167,621.25</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			
Chemicals	\$ 6,945.16	\$ 6,619.18	\$ 6,270.57
Seed	\$ 34,124.56	\$ 21,205.39	\$ 15,430.25
Shop Supplies	\$ 2,352.37	\$ 1,398.72	\$ 2,154.84
Vehicle Fuels and Maintenance	\$ 29,114.37	\$ 28,261.99	\$ 35,027.68
Office Supplies	\$ 446.87	\$ 67.49	\$ 461.85
Uniforms and Equipment	\$ 260.35	\$ 794.05	\$ 719.46
Health and Safety	\$ 324.77	\$ 524.96	\$ 735.07
Postage and Mailings	\$ 110.70	\$ 171.65	\$ -
Communication Services	\$ 2,124.87	\$ 1,988.34	\$ 2,159.24
Staff Education and Training	\$ 1,028.11	\$ 1,008.92	\$ 1,423.04
Utilities	\$ 2,990.55	\$ 2,751.25	\$ 3,337.82
Contractual Labor	\$ 51,968.50	\$ 39,730.00	\$ 41,798.25
Building and Equipment Maintenance	\$ 2,705.73	\$ 9,087.20	\$ 7,989.05
Equipment and Machinery Purchases	\$ 767.71	\$ 54,318.22	\$ -
Equipment and Machinery Purchases (LRTF Grants)	\$ 4,081.85	\$ 69,470.00	\$ 963.11
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 139,346.47</b>	<b>\$ 237,397.36</b>	<b>\$ 118,470.23</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 325,016.49</b>	<b>\$ 423,294.37</b>	<b>\$ 286,091.48</b>
<b>BUDGET REVENUE</b>			
Miscellaneous	\$ 5,756.36	\$ 11,284.76	\$ 6,507.66
Sale of Assets	\$ -	\$ 20,500.00	\$ -
Drainage District Services	\$ -	\$ 5,034.79	\$ 9,937.88
Grants	\$ 12,807.48	\$ 1,648.00	\$ 770.49
County Ordinance Violations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fuel Tax Refund	\$ 683.75	\$ 903.15	\$ 841.00
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 19,247.59</b>	<b>\$ 39,370.70</b>	<b>\$ 18,057.03</b>

## FACILITIES REVENUE AND USAGE - FY22-FY24

	FY24	FY23	FY22
<b>Dakins Lake Main Campground Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$51,036 2,111 / 1,993	\$47,949 1,952 / 1,820	\$53,140 2,300 / 2,070
<b>Dakins Lake East Campground Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$12,742 591 / 657	\$11,179 551 / 712	\$3,196 204 / 261
<b>Hickory Grove Breezy Bay Campground Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$112,238 5,345 / 4,465	\$114,597 5,359 / 4,722	\$103,835 4,812 / 5,042
<b>Hickory Grove Primitive Campground Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$5,164 354 / 589	\$5,839 452 / 764	\$3,670 298 / 447
<b>Robison Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$41 5 / 10	\$588 51 / 363	\$842 64 / 392
<b>Supervised Youth Camping Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$375 15 / 161	Combined with Robison	Combined with Robison
<b>Multipurpose Room Revenue</b> # paid rentals / # rentals with fee waived	\$4,095 16 / 45	\$4,058 15 / 15	\$3,688 11 / 22
<b>Dakins Shelter Revenue</b> # reservations	\$400 8	\$400 8	\$650 13
<b>Oriole Ridge Revenue</b> # reservations	\$1,800 24	\$2,025 27	\$1,825 19
<b>Snow Bunting Revenue</b> # reservations	\$700 14	\$500 10	\$400 9
<b>Special Events Permits Revenue / # permits</b>	\$300 / 4	\$225 / 3	\$400 / 4