



FY 25

# ANNUAL REPORT

Prairie Valley Preserve



# 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>15</b>	Water Quality
<b>17</b>	Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM)
<b>19</b>	Environmental Education
<b>21</b>	Outreach
<b>22</b>	Volunteers
<b>23</b>	Story County Conservation <i>Partners</i>
<b>24</b>	Grants Awarded
<b>25</b>	Financial Reports

# AT A GLANCE

## Recreation & Projects Story County Conservation



### OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Story County Conservation owns/manages more than 3,600 acres of public parks and natural areas
- 2 campgrounds, 4 lakes, 2 beaches, 4 playgrounds, numerous picnic areas, and more
- 89 miles of trails, including the South Skunk River Water Trail
- Over 2,100 acres of public hunting land

### CURRENT PROJECTS

- Dakins cabin
- Deppe Family Conservation Area development
- Hannum's Mill Dam mitigation
- Hickory Grove Park walleye rearing pond
- Prairie Valley Preserve development
- Edge of Field practices - bioreactors/saturated buffers

### WATER & NATURAL RESOURCES

- Countywide programs implementing natural resources and water quality improvements
- Water Management Authority initiatives
- Batch and build private landowner initiatives
- Water quality monitoring program
- Edge of field water quality projects

### INTEGRATED ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (IRVM)

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

### COMPLETED PROJECTS

- Countywide Trails Master Plan
- McFarland Park Shop replacement
- Heart of Iowa Natural Trail paving from Cambridge to Collins
- Christiansen trail bridge replacement
- Hickory Grove Archery Range improvements
- Prairie Valley Preserve wetland project

### UPCOMING PROJECTS

- Hickory Grove Park Beach Improvements & Accessibility Design
- Dakins Lake Bridge replacement
- Oxbow restorations on the S. Skunk River and West Indian Creek
- Skunk River Greenbelt acquisition

### EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- Hundreds of programs for schools, the public, and private groups
- Programs in 7 Story County school districts, 2 Christian schools, and several homeschool groups
- Programs for tots to seniors



**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, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation 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.

This fiscal year marked the passage of the Story County Water and Land Legacy Bond. In November nearly seventy eight percent of Story County voters voted to improve Story County's natural resources and recreational opportunities. This monumental support will have a lasting impact on the health and vitality of Story County.

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

Craig Meyers  
Chair, Story County Conservation Board



# BOARD AND STAFF

## Story County Board of Supervisors

Linda Murken (2019-2026)  
 Lisa Heddens (2019-2026)  
 Latifah Faisal (2021-2028)

## Story County Conservation Board

Dr. Jim Pease (2011-2025) Christine Laumer (2017-2026)  
 Craig Meyers (2013-2027) Erica Place (2024-2028)  
 Dr. Nancy Franz (2015-2024) Dr. Judy Levings (2025-2029)  
 Linda Murken, ex-officio (2019-2024)

## Story County Conservation Staff

### Administration

Mike Cox, Director  
 Marianne Harrelson, Administrative Coordinator  
 Jessica Paulin, Administrative 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 (to April 2025)  
 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  
 Bailey Walters, Cons. Technician I (May 2025 to current)  
 Ryan Wiemold, Park Superintendent

### IRVM

Ty Hamiel, Vegetation Mgmt. Biologist  
 Tyler Kelley, Vegetation Mgmt. Specialist (to Aug. 2024)  
 Nathan Schmitt, Veg. Mgmt. Specialist (Oct. 2024 to current)

### Environmental Education

Bekah Beall Warburton, Naturalist  
 Amber Carpenter, Naturalist  
 Bobbi Donovan, Naturalist  
 Jerry Keys, Environmental Education Coordinator  
 Madi Nolte, Community Engagement Coordinator  
 Clair Pfantz, Naturalist

### 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

### Seasonal Employees - 2025

Abigail Boorman	Griffith Linder
Amy Burns	Laura Macdonald
Christian Fouraker	Shelby Mielke
Paige Hollenberg	Jocelyn Ramos
Yutana Hughes	Clarisse Roscio
Wyatt Johnson	Joshua Webb
Nick Larson	



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

**Sara Carmichael** - Headwaters of the South Skunk River, Fourmile Creek, and Ioway Creek Watershed Management Authority Alternate

**Brandon Clough** - Iowa Prairie Network Board Member

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

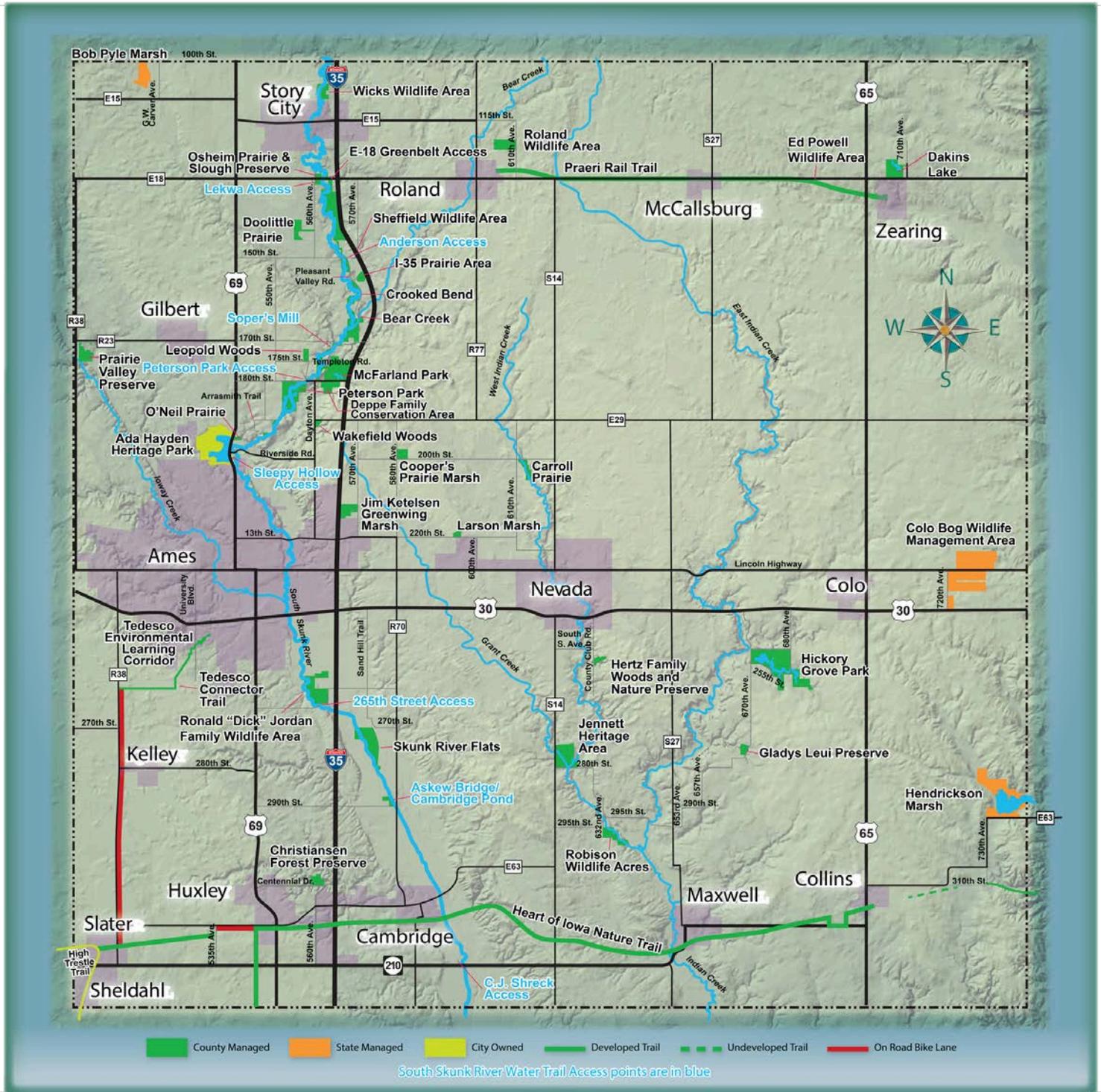
**Bobbi Donovan** - Iowa Association of Naturalists Awards Committee Member; Iowa Association of Naturalists Executive Committee - Vice President; Iowa County Conservation Systems Board of Directors

**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 Past President; High Trestle Trail Advisory Committee Member

# CONSERVATION PROPERTIES MAP





# PARKS & AREA AMENITIES

ACRES: P Prairie/Wetland/Woodland  
 CAMPSITES: Electric/Water/Septic/Non-Electric/Youth/Dump Station/Remote  
 WATER: Drinking/Showers  
 TOILETS: Flush/Portable  
 SHELTER: Enclosed/Open/Rental/Free  
 PICNICKING  
 TRAILS: Hiking/Equestrian/Mt. Bike/Bike-Limestone/Snowmobile/Water  
 SWIMMING: Beach  
 FISHING: Pier/Jetty/Lake(acres)/Stream  
 BOATING: Canoe/Electric/Boat Rental/Ramp  
 RECREATION: Archery/Boat Rental/  
 HUNTING: Wetland/Forest/Up

<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

Ongoing improvements in our parks and natural areas offer visitors more opportunities for recreation and ways to connect with nature.

## New SCC Park Opens

The Prairie Valley Preserve wetland project was completed and filled with rainfall during the 2025 season. This project was a partnership between SCC, the City of Ames, IDALS, and Ducks Unlimited. It has a 20-acre pumped nutrient reduction wetland that has helped drop nitrate levels significantly. Interpretive kiosks were placed on site with mapping and park signs. Trail development was complete for phase 1 of the property.

Prairie Valley Preserve's remnant prairie is named Landers Prairie, after Dr. R. Q. "Jake" Landers. A dedication to Dr. Landers took place in May 2025 and the park opened in June 2025.



## HOINT Paving Continues

The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT) phases 4-6 were completed. This effort was part of the larger Destination Iowa project that paved 9 miles from S-14 to Collins and will also feature amenity improvements. This project brings the HOINT in Story County to 19 miles of paved trail. Phase 7, which includes Collins, was designed. Phase 7 construction is expected in late 2025. The Iowa DOT finished the I-35 tunnel on the HOINT which features interpretive artwork on the tunnel wing walls to look like Monarch butterflies. I-35 is a known migratory habitat for butterflies.

## Trails Master Plan Completed

SCC has completed the Trails Master Plan, which outlines priority projects for the near future. This plan included extensive public input opportunities through open houses and online information and feedback options.

Informational panels have been added to the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor Connector Trail, which highlight natural elements found along the trail.



## Hickory Grove Park

The Hickory Grove Park sewer project has been completed, successfully connecting the park to Colo's city lagoon. Efforts to maintain a clean beach at HGP and improve water quality have been ongoing. This includes beach conditioning, adding new sand, implementing goose deterrent measures, and conducting water quality monitoring. Additionally, the Hickory Grove Park Archery Range has been updated with new targets, target stands, and a designated shooting line. New fish cleaning stations have been installed at both the north and south boat ramps. To enhance navigation within the park, site amenity signs have been installed, highlighting various use areas.



## Peterson Park

West Peterson shelters were completed. A large shelter east of the parking area includes tables, a grill, and fire ring. Two smaller shelters with tables and grills were placed along the beach top area and connect to the concrete path for ADA access to the parking lot.

AEDs were installed at all Story County Conservation buildings for staff and public use.



## Christiansen Forest Preserve

A lot of work has been done at Christiansen Forest Preserve. A trail bridge was installed to reconnect the trail loop in the back of the park. This trail is frequently used by school groups, scouts, and the public. A new kiosk and new signage area near the parking lot have also been installed giving the park a fresh new look.

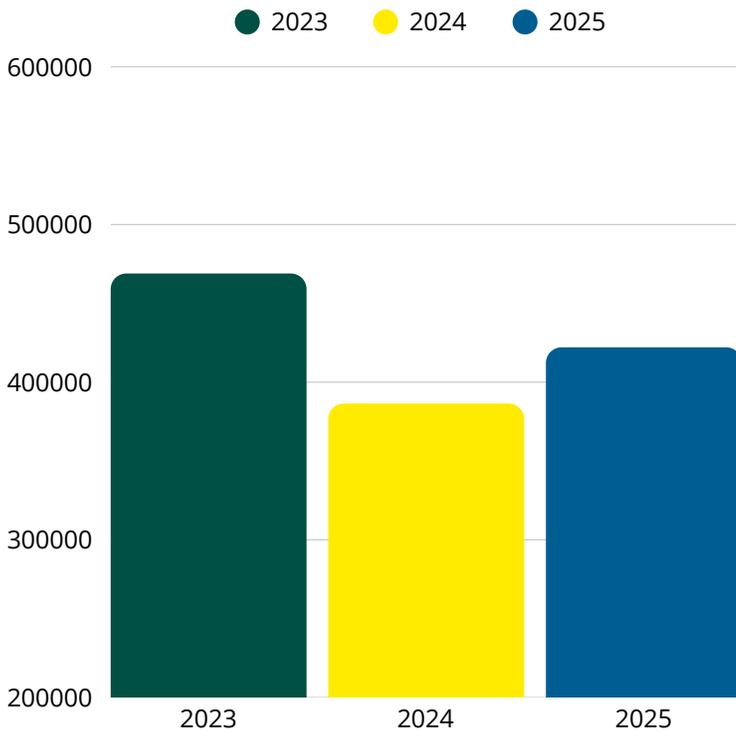


## McFarland Park

The construction project at McFarland Park shop has been completed. This project involved the demolition of the existing structure built in 1985 and the construction of a new, modern shop and office facility designed to accommodate current and future growth. Additionally, car charging stations were installed at McFarland Park, providing staff and the public with the ability to charge electric vehicles while at the park. This initiative was part of SCC's Strategic Plan. Trail steps were also replaced on the "pink" section of trail at McFarland Park.



### Trail and Vehicle Counter Totals



**Over 400,000**

visits were recorded at only 8 locations, underscoring the strong demand for our Story County Conservation areas. While these counts are helpful, actual visitation is much higher. These counters provide a snapshot at 8 points in our many properties, not a comprehensive total. Our parks provide visitors diverse outdoor opportunities, advancing our mission to make Story County a great place to recreate.



**61 lodge and shelter rentals**



**8,193 campsite reservations**



# NATURAL RESOURCES

Improving our natural resources and connecting people with nature is accomplished by direct natural resource management, climate change mitigation, and public engagement.



626 hours of volunteer work



Harvested \$18,520 worth of prairie seed



Prescribed fire on 333 acres



Story County Conservation hosted a Sensitive Area Inventory Landowner Field Day at Rosemary Osheim's property. The event included several guest speakers discussing various management topics and allowed discussion about hurdles uniquely affecting private landowners.

The Nevada FFA chapter planted 11 acres of soybeans into the spoil site at Hickory Grove Park following the recent lake restoration to aid in prairie reconstruction. This is one example of partnering with neighbors to achieve the goal of a healthy rural Story County for current and future generations.





SCC hosted several Conservation Corps of Iowa groups and worked on timber stand improvement and invasive species removal at McFarland Park, Robison Wildlife Acres, Christiansen Forest Preserve, Hickory Grove Park, and E-18 Access.

Restoration work at Jennett Heritage Area took place to recover from tornado damage sustained in 2024. Prairie seed for the restoration was funded by the Big Bluestem Audubon Society.



A public burn was held at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor, providing an opportunity to educate the public about controlled burns. Attendees gained firsthand experience of how SCC utilizes controlled burns a management tool and the benefits they offer.

Cattle grazed on undesired cool-season grasses at Carroll Prairie in the spring, setting them back and opening up room for native plants and diversifying habitat. This is an example of SCC's expanded efforts in partnering with local producers.



### Additional Natural Resource Work in FY25

- Planted trees at Deppe, Christiansen Forest Preserve, Robison Wildlife Acres
- Bioassessment of S. Skunk River at Osheim Prairie and Slough Preserve
- Protected 39 acres of land through Conservation Easements
- Grazed a combined 45 acres with both cattle and goats
- Field Trips/Presentations - Trees Forever - Stewards of Beautiful Land, Watershed Academy, Landers Prairie Dedication, DNR Employee Grassland Training, multiple ISU class presentations, Doolittle Prairie walks
- Re-vegetation projects - Prairie Valley Preserve, McFarland Park, Deppe

# WATER QUALITY

Story County Conservation has watershed specific goals and uses strategies addressing education, outreach and water quality improvement.



52 volunteers assisted in the 2024 monitoring season



900 data sheets were entered in the Clean Water Hub



26 sites were monitored twice a month for the entire year



## Water Quality Education

SCC created a free water-themed backpack available for checkout at McFarland Park. This pack includes multiple activities for the entire family, along with water monitoring supplies that can be used to test any water source.

## Edge of Field Program

The Edge of Field 'batch and build' program is working to get more saturated buffers and bioreactors in the ground. We are now in year 5. Installation for year 2 started Jan. 2025 and will be completed at the end of the calendar year. To date, 55 practices have been installed treating 1,848 acres of drainage from farm fields.



## June 2025 Field Day

The Field Day took place at Hickory Grove Park and was organized by the Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Heartland Co-op. The event aimed to highlight the significance of cover crops and demonstrate how to use the interseeder Hagie Hi-boy sprayer to plant cover crops before harvest.



## Walk for Water

Story County Conservation partnered with HACH for their international event, "Walk for Water." This event focuses on education and fundraising to raise awareness about the importance of safe drinking water in countries where many people still have to walk long distances to meet their daily water needs.

## Cleaning our Waterways

In May 2025, 34 people removed over 3,200 pounds of trash from Ioway Creek going from 4<sup>th</sup> St. to S. 16<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to the Skunk River Paddlers, Outdoor Alliance of Story County, City of Ames, and Prairie Rivers of Iowa for their continued leadership to clean up our waterways.



## Water Quality Training

Staff hosted a macroinvertebrate training at the Nevada fairgrounds along the W. Indian Creek and conducted one test along Worrell Creek on S. 16<sup>th</sup> St in Ames.

# INTEGRATED ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (IRVM)

IRVM integrates the use of native and other select types of vegetation with appropriate management techniques to produce a cost-effective, environmentally sound management alternative for roadsides.



**Planted 11 Acres of Roadside**



**Prescribed Fire on 22 Acres of Roadside**



**58 lbs. Seed Hand Harvested or Combined**



## IRVM Work FY25

- SCC staff networked with local groups including NRCS, Nevada Historical Society, SC Pheasants Forever, Iowa National Heritage Foundation, and Friends of Ada Hayden
- Staff gave presentations for the ISU Foreign Exchange Student Program, Golden Kiwanis, Ames Women's Club, Nevada Schools, and Trees Forever
- Staff presented the Nasties of Nature program to City of Nevada and Secondary Roads staff
- 18 miles of brush in sensitive areas were treated, 48 guardrail sites were sprayed
- 12 acres of roadsides were mowed
- 6 noxious weed complaints were addressed
- Increased the diversity of seed harvested to 54 species
- Rebuilt and installed 33 American Kestrel nest boxes

## IRVM FIELD OPERATIONS COMPARISON BY FISCAL YEAR

	FY25	FY24	FY23
Work Orders Completed	38	147	124
Roadside Plantings (sites)	54	164	71
Roadside Plantings (acres)	11	36.25	30
Custom Plantings (sites)	0	0	8
Custom Plantings (acres)	0	16	43
Grant Funded Seeding (sites) *New FY25	3	0	0
Grant Funded Seeding (acres) *New FY25	8	0	0
Roadside Burns (sites)	12	4	12
Roadside Burns (acres)	22	5.75	25
Roadside Weeds Sprayed (miles)	729	305	195
Foliar Brush Sprayed (miles)	18	34	31
Equipment Rentals (landowners)	19	30	31
Equipment Rentals (acres)	109	268	250
Pounds of Seed Harvested	236	344	402
Volunteer Hours	92	86	81
Drainage District (amount billed)	0	\$0	\$842.89
Drainage District Revenue Received	0	\$0	\$5,034.79

In 2025, IRVM staff used the ICES Work Order system to mainly focus on seeding areas disturbed by Secondary Roads. We've transitioned all other work duties to other mapping/tracking software to include weed issues, re-vegetation sites, and general sight visibility issues, etc. This took out general IRVM duties and reduced the workload tracked by the Work Order system by over 75%.

Work on private property is no longer needed to backfill revenue. For this reason, work on private property is not part of the work focus for IRVM staff moving forward. We no longer do custom plantings, mowing, or prescribed burns on private property for revenue as our main work duties keep us busy enough.

Noxious weed control is one of the main priorities for IRVM staff annually. For this reason, staff will spend a large portion of the Fall spraying for noxious weeds in addition to Spring spray. Fall applications are extremely beneficial for bi-annual weed control but cut down on the amount of Fall seedings and brush spraying work during that season. Plantings/Re-seeding areas will be focused mainly in Spring/early Summer and late Fall when conditions are favorable.

Mechanical tree removal work in the counties Drainage District's is largely completed. Most Districts now are on a 3-year maintenance brush spray rotation which is contracted out. Billing and Revenue are handled by the County Auditor for any work needed moving forward and not necessary for IRVM work to track.



# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Story County Conservation conducted 1,018 education and outreach programs resulting in 28,902 contacts through 562 indoor presentations, 426 outdoor experiences, 6 service-learning opportunities and 14 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 at one time.

## Connecting Children with the Outdoors

In our first overnight out-of-county trip since 2020, the Iowa Explorers went to Backbone State Park.

SCC helped plan and participated in week-long School of the Wild programs with Gilbert 5<sup>th</sup> grade and Colonesco 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

This was the third year Story County Conservation loaned kayaks, dutch ovens, pie irons, and fishing poles to the Ames High School physical education department for their outdoor skills classes.



## Creating Experiences with the Landscape

A new Dutch oven cooking area was constructed at McFarland Park's Iowa History Day field trip site by an Eagle Scout. This site is regularly utilized during school programs.

Partnered with Prairie Rivers of Iowa and other groups to host Monarch Magic at Ada Hayden Heritage Park in September 2024, educating hundreds of people about monarch butterflies.

## Climate Change and Environmental Health

- Two rain barrel workshops were conducted at McFarland Park and the Nevada Library.
- Composting is now part of all school field trip lunches at McFarland Park.
- Provided local eco-type prairie forb seeds to the Ames and Nevada Seed libraries.
- Co-coordinated two Ames Pollinator Project presentations and provided promotional assistance with a third program.





## Connecting Adults with the Outdoors

Story County Conservation hosts an OWLS (Older Wiser Livelier Souls) each month September through May. Speakers engage their audience with a variety of topics, offering the opportunity for adult education. OWLS also provides time for community members to socialize and bond with other conservation-minded individuals.

## Field to Fork Program

The 2024 Field To Fork program was the third time it was held in Story County and the first time Story County Conservation was involved. This six-month workshop is for adults with little to no hunting experience, teaching them how to archery hunt, field dress, and cook white-tailed deer. Environmental Education Coordinator Jerry Keys was the site coordinator and was assisted by Operations Supervisor Jacob Smth, DNR Conservation Officer Brandon Berquist, and two volunteer mentors. Nine people participated in the program. Eight of the participants hunted deer in the 2024 archery season, and six successfully harvested at least one deer.



## Learning Outdoor Skills

The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Wild Women of the Woods was held October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at Hickory Grove Park. Seventeen different programs were offered throughout the day and half event. Each of the 44 participants was able to choose and attend up to 5 activities ranging from water sports and outdoor cooking to orienteering and bee keeping.

## Get Outdoors Day Event

Story County Conservation hosted a free public Get Outdoors Day event at McFarland Park. Participants enjoyed a variety of activities, some of which include paddling, bird walks, fire starting, a s'mores station, and face painting. Several groups partnered to make the event successful, including Wild Birds, Skunk River Paddlers, Prairie Rivers of Iowa, Outdoor Alliance of Story County, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Jon Wilson Photography, Iowa Stormwater Education Partnership, and the Story County Animal Shelter. It was also a great opportunity for our volunteers to showcase their skills and make the day a fun event for everyone.





## Parks Passport

A Parks Passport booklet was deployed in spring 2025 encouraging community members to explore new SCC-managed parks and trails. Passports were distributed for free and include 12 locations to explore, complete with “challenge questions,” and a place to record answers. After visiting all 12 parks, users are encouraged to return to the McFarland Park Conservation Center with their booklet to receive a stamp of completion.



## Community Outreach

Expanding SCC’s visibility and community presence was key during summer 2024, leading up to the Story County Water and Land Legacy bond educational campaign. Staff and volunteers attended numerous festivals and markets in almost every community countywide, and even joined the Lincoln Highway parade in Nevada.

## Celebrate Iowa’s Outdoors Day

SCC staff and board members joined numerous like-minded conservation and recreation-based organizations for the very first Celebrate Iowa’s Outdoors Day at the Capitol in March, hosted by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. The event gathered Iowans to engage with legislators, hear speakers and learn from interactive displays - all while celebrating with others passionate about protecting spaces for outdoor recreation and natural resources.





# VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are integral in attaining SCC’s mission. Volunteers’ hours logged in FY25 included: serving on the Story County Conservation Board (Administrative), 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.

## Group Engagement

Private volunteer work days for individual organizations and workplaces continued in popularity this year, engaging many new volunteers and efficiently tackling big projects.

More than 10 group work days ranged from trail work during the United Way Day of Caring, to spring park clean ups, to a local construction company, Renomads, donating 65 hours of skilled labor toward installing a new park bridge at Christiansen Forest Preserve.



Volunteers from Vertex at McFarland Park on United Way Day of Caring 2024.



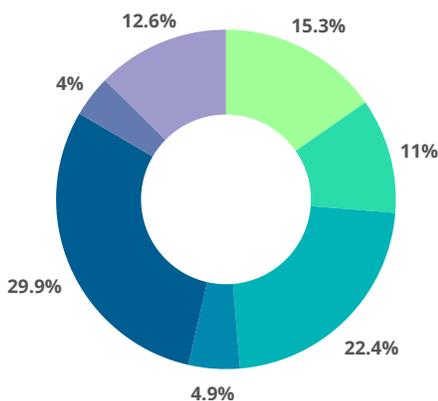
11 Group work days



More than 320 hrs volunteer service

## Volunteer Hours

Volunteers logged a total of 4,178 hours in FY25, a great increase from hours donated the previous fiscal year. Using the Independent Sector volunteer service value of \$29.96 per hour (IA), **volunteers provided \$125,172.88 of service** to SCC in FY25.



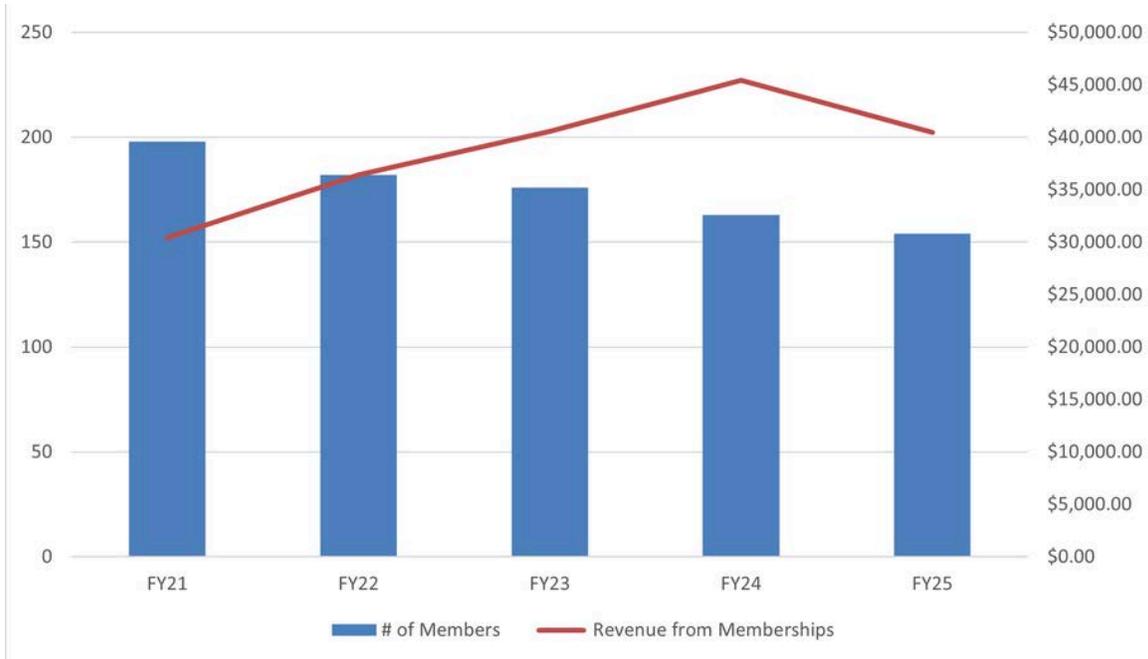
= 4,178 HOURS TOTAL

- Natural Resources, 626 hrs
- Water Quality Monitoring, 447.5 hrs
- Park & Trail Maintenance, 916 hrs

- Outreach, 199 hrs
- Environmental Education, 1,221 hrs
- Bluebird Box Monitoring, 161.5 hrs
- Administrative, 515.5 hrs

# 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 \$40,464.25 towards the restoration of up to five oxbows at Wicks Wildlife Area, located just north of Story City.



**Aerial view of Wicks Wildlife Area**



# GRANTS AWARDED

The following grants and agreements were awarded in FY25. Expenditures and reimbursements may occur in the year awarded or over several years.

FUNDING SOURCE	TITLE	AMOUNT
Iowa Department of Natural Resources - Water Trails Development Grant	CJ Shreck Access Planning, Engineering, and Bidding	\$40,000
Iowa Department of Natural Resources - Wildlife Diversity Habitat Management Grant	Doolittle Prairie Brush Removal	\$4,200
Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Preserve Board	Doolittle Prairie Pothole Wetlands Seed Bank Study	\$2,000
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Agreements	Prairie Seed Funding - Prairie Valley	\$5,500
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Agreements	Prairie Seed Funding - Carroll Prairie	\$9,200
Land and Water Conservation Fund	Deppe Development Project	\$161,000
Iowa Department of Natural Resources Cooperative Agreement	Hickory Grove Beach Restoration	\$75,127
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Iowa Soybean Association Landowner Agreements	Carroll Prairie Oxbow Restoration	100% cost funded
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Iowa Soybean Association Landowner Agreements	Wicks Wildlife Area Oxbow Restoration	100% cost funded
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Agreements	McFarland Park Prairie Seeding	\$10,185
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Agreements	Hickory Grove Park Prairie Seeding	\$10,415
Great Outdoors Foundation Fiscal Sponsorship	Hannum's Mill Dam Mitigation	\$50,000
<b>Total Grants/Agreements - FY25</b>		<b>\$367,627</b>

# FINANCIAL REPORTS

## CONSERVATION BUDGET

REVENUE			
General Basic	FY25	FY24	FY23
Building Rent	\$ 4,699.17	\$ 4,095.00	\$ 4,057.50
Miscellaneous	\$ 14,132.85	\$ 4,393.95	\$ 1,596.37
Sale of Assets	\$ 36,750.00	\$ 63,300.00	\$ 6,500.00
FEMA	\$ -	\$ 3,634.50	\$ 7,269.01
State Payments	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 118.32	\$ -
Grants	\$ 1,171,741.88	\$ 16,683.80	\$ 43,435.00
Environmental Education Fees	\$ 32,622.41	\$ 27,385.25	\$ 22,774.52
Boat Rental	\$ 1,321.90	\$ 46.80	\$ 1,300.00
Recreational Facilities Rentals	\$ 3,751.60	\$ 2,900.00	\$ 2,925.00
Other Recreational Fees (Concessions)	\$ -	\$ 144.50	\$ 991.30
Land Rent	\$ -	\$ 27.77	\$ 27.77
Donations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Firewood	\$ 1,117.50	\$ 895.50	\$ 1,396.00
Fuel Tax Refund	\$ 3,145.80	\$ 3,249.00	\$ 2,876.13
Boat Titling Fees	\$ 1,010.00	\$ 850.00	\$ 1,010.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 1,272,293.11</b>	<b>\$ 127,724.39</b>	<b>\$ 96,158.60</b>
<b>REAP</b>			
Interest	\$ 3,649.93	\$ 3,168.14	\$ 1,478.75
REAP Funds	\$ 30,072.00	\$ 32,107.00	\$ 29,093.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 33,721.93</b>	<b>\$ 35,275.14</b>	<b>\$ 30,571.75</b>
<b>CONSERVATION RESERVE</b>			
Camping Fees	\$ 196,192.07	\$ 182,112.25	\$ 180,151.64
Grants	\$ -	\$ 150,112.50	\$ -
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 196,192.07</b>	<b>\$ 332,224.75</b>	<b>\$ 180,151.64</b>
<b>TRUST FUND</b>			
Interest	\$ 36,643.31	\$ 32,033.97	\$ 13,119.68
Donations	\$ 204,542.98	\$ 185,867.19	\$ 203,127.23
Miscellaneous	\$ -	\$ 630.00	\$ -
Easements	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,283.70
Grants	\$ -	\$ 200,000.00	\$ -
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 241,186.29</b>	<b>\$ 418,531.16</b>	<b>\$ 217,530.61</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 1,743,393.40</b>	<b>\$ 913,755.44</b>	<b>\$ 524,412.60</b>

<b>EXPENSES</b>			
	FY25	FY24	FY23
<b>SALARIES &amp; WAGES</b>			
Permanent Staff	\$ 1,452,227.30	\$ 1,290,213.11	\$ 1,269,792.27
Temporary - Seasonal Staff	\$ 103,629.71	\$ 104,294.52	\$ 103,196.61
Overtime	\$ 7,513.33	\$ 1,684.19	\$ 864.89
Payroll Expenses/Benefits	\$ 568,517.35	\$ 554,675.75	\$ 540,560.14
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 2,131,887.69</b>	<b>\$ 1,950,867.57</b>	<b>\$ 1,914,413.91</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			
Conservation Board	\$ 1,047.76	\$ 1,932.05	\$ 2,015.83
Shop Supplies	\$ 10,593.97	\$ 13,183.91	\$ 10,277.95
Environmental Education	\$ 31,122.52	\$ 34,363.72	\$ 29,472.71
Custodial Supplies	\$ 5,049.71	\$ 4,865.65	\$ 4,567.71
Conservation Center Equipment Parts and Supplies	\$ 10,742.04	\$ 20,936.37	\$ 13,345.34
Vehicle Fuels and Maintenance	\$ 101,770.28	\$ 100,133.61	\$ 120,581.70
Office/Administration	\$ 12,691.95	\$ 17,355.97	\$ 10,450.46
FEWA	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Recreational Supplies	\$ 264.75	\$ 31,157.93	\$ 1,387.14
Uniforms and Equipment	\$ 10,955.97	\$ 9,762.14	\$ 11,978.51
Health and Safety	\$ 15,669.55	\$ 6,176.04	\$ 6,037.92
Volunteer Management	\$ 5,863.06	\$ 5,521.71	\$ 5,020.35
Marketing	\$ 9,342.91	\$ 6,305.46	\$ 8,580.59
Postage and Mailings	\$ 3,452.48	\$ 3,086.28	\$ 2,976.28
Communication Services	\$ 30,177.50	\$ 29,392.47	\$ 29,164.27
Staff Education and Training	\$ 10,421.88	\$ 11,007.08	\$ 19,688.34
Utilities	\$ 62,454.08	\$ 64,464.92	\$ 61,705.64
Grounds Maintenance	\$ 167,269.92	\$ 152,170.90	\$ 85,511.90
Building Maintenance	\$ 52,046.82	\$ 109,514.16	\$ 71,442.67
Equipment Rent/Maintenance	\$ 4,125.23	\$ 3,776.87	\$ 3,546.14
Contractual Labor	\$ 132,065.18	\$ 219,229.35	\$ 143,820.87
Taxes, Leases, and Easements	\$ 5,146.13	\$ 2,403.41	\$ 782.67
Equipment and Machinery Purchases	\$ 249,080.16	\$ 235,986.99	\$ 125,034.04
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 931,353.85</b>	<b>\$ 1,082,726.99</b>	<b>\$ 767,389.03</b>
<b>CAPITAL EXPENSES</b>			
Land Acquisition	\$ 17,125.00	\$ 42,125.00	\$ 25,000.00
Buildings & Equipment	\$ 447,803.45	\$ 633,418.98	\$ 303,835.85
Heart of Iowa Nature Trail	\$ 1,819,947.37	\$ 20,997.40	\$ 78,498.79
Grants	\$ 1,206.00	\$ 151,229.90	\$ 12,842.10
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 2,286,081.82</b>	<b>\$ 847,771.28</b>	<b>\$ 420,176.74</b>
<b>REAP</b>			
Land Acquisition	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Buildings & Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Expenditures	\$ 14,478.93	\$ 14,374.24	\$ 57,827.05
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 14,478.93</b>	<b>\$ 14,374.24</b>	<b>\$ 57,827.05</b>
<b>CONSERVATION RESERVE</b>			
Land Acquisition	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Buildings & Equipment	\$ 14,874.16	\$ 295,768.80	\$ 4,200.00
Other Expenditures	\$ 11,167.12	\$ 3,020.21	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ 67,300.00	\$ -
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 26,041.28</b>	<b>\$ 366,089.01</b>	<b>\$ 4,200.00</b>
<b>TRUST FUND</b>			
Land Acquisition	\$ 14,209.00	\$ 250,709.75	\$ 34,250.00
Buildings & Equipment	\$ 389,678.85	\$ -	\$ 21,958.50
Other Expenditures	\$ 91,383.94	\$ 18,754.00	\$ 24,271.39
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 495,271.79</b>	<b>\$ 269,463.75</b>	<b>\$ 80,479.89</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL ALL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$5,885,115.36</b>	<b>\$ 4,531,292.84</b>	<b>\$ 3,244,486.62</b>

**IRVM  
BUDGET EXPENDITURES**

	FY25	FY24	FY23
<b>SALARIES &amp; WAGES</b>			
Permanent Staff	\$ 122,997.22	\$ 120,371.43	\$ 122,626.55
Temporary - Seasonal Staff	\$ 24,649.10	\$ 27,896.28	\$ 24,665.52
Overtime	\$ 18.77	\$ -	\$ 49.31
Payroll Expenses/Benefits	\$ 35,452.02	\$ 37,402.31	\$ 38,555.63
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 183,117.11</b>	<b>\$ 185,670.02</b>	<b>\$ 185,897.01</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			
Chemicals	\$ 11,518.27	\$ 6,945.16	\$ 6,619.18
Seed	\$ 32,087.36	\$ 34,124.56	\$ 21,205.39
Shop Supplies	\$ 2,162.13	\$ 2,352.37	\$ 1,398.72
Vehicle Fuels and Maintenance	\$ 20,933.03	\$ 29,114.37	\$ 28,261.99
Office Supplies	\$ 971.09	\$ 446.87	\$ 67.49
Uniforms and Equipment	\$ 752.22	\$ 260.35	\$ 794.05
Health and Safety	\$ 666.69	\$ 324.77	\$ 524.96
Postage and Mailings	\$ 100.00	\$ 110.70	\$ 171.65
Communication Services	\$ 2,190.02	\$ 2,124.87	\$ 1,988.34
Staff Education and Training	\$ 6,493.02	\$ 1,028.11	\$ 1,008.92
Utilities	\$ 2,382.21	\$ 2,990.55	\$ 2,751.25
Contractual Labor	\$ 40,286.00	\$ 51,968.50	\$ 39,730.00
Building and Equipment Maintenance	\$ 2,203.29	\$ 2,705.73	\$ 9,087.20
Equipment and Machinery Purchases	\$ -	\$ 767.71	\$ 54,318.22
Equipment and Machinery Purchases (LRTF Grants)	\$ -	\$ 4,081.85	\$ 69,470.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 122,745.33</b>	<b>\$ 139,346.47</b>	<b>\$ 237,397.36</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 305,862.44</b>	<b>\$ 325,016.49</b>	<b>\$ 423,294.37</b>
<b>BUDGET REVENUE</b>			
Miscellaneous	\$ 7,283.76	\$ 5,756.36	\$ 11,284.76
Sale of Assets	\$ 1,500.00	\$ -	\$ 20,500.00
Drainage District Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,034.79
Grants	\$ -	\$ 12,807.48	\$ 1,648.00
County Ordinance Violations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fuel Tax Refund	\$ 1,096.23	\$ 683.75	\$ 903.15
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 9,879.99</b>	<b>\$ 19,247.59</b>	<b>\$ 39,370.70</b>

## FACILITIES REVENUE AND USAGE - FY23-FY25

	FY25	FY24	FY23
<b>Dakins Lake Main Campground Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$49,506 1,999 / 2,161	\$51,036 2,111 / 1,993	\$47,949 1,952 / 1,820
<b>Dakins Lake East Campground Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$8,833 365 / 500	\$12,742 591 / 657	\$11,179 551 / 712
<b>Hickory Grove Breezy Bay Campground Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$121,335 5,121 / 4,598	\$112,238 5,345 / 4,465	\$114,597 5,359 / 4,722
<b>Hickory Grove Primitive Campground Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$7,126 421 / 636	\$5,164 354 / 589	\$5,839 452 / 764
<b>Robison Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$555 49 / 122	\$41 5 / 10	\$588 51 / 363
<b>Supervised Youth Camping Revenue</b> # camping nights / # people	\$400 16 / 176	\$375 15 / 161	Combined with Robison
<b>Multipurpose Room Revenue</b> # paid rentals / # rentals with fee waived	\$4,695 12 / 13	\$4,095 16 / 45	\$4,058 15 / 15
<b>Dakins Shelter Revenue</b> # reservations	\$540 10	\$400 8	\$400 8
<b>Oriole Ridge Revenue</b> # reservations	\$2,923 37	\$1,800 24	\$2,025 27
<b>Snow Bunting Revenue</b> # reservations	\$756 14	\$700 14	\$500 10
<b>Special Events Permits Revenue / # permits</b>	\$375 / 15	\$300 / 4	\$225 / 3