



ANNUAL REPORT

2018

JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2018



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It has been quite a spectacular year for Polk County Conservation! We have seen dramatic changes such as the completion of the Jester Park Nature Center, the creation of the Mark C. Ackelson recreational trail that surrounds the newly restored Easter Lake, and the official designation of the Fourmile Greenbelt - soon to be the third largest park in Polk County.

We have worked diligently to serve the public by implementing our mission of providing the citizens of Polk County with quality outdoor recreation, conservation education, and the long-term protection of Polk County's natural heritage. We continue to provide environmental education to thousands of schoolchildren, restore waterways, maintain recreational trail networks, host public nature programs, work with thousands of volunteers, and restore prairies, wetlands, and woodlands.

Our strong public support, and the incredibly useful Polk County Water and Legacy bond, continue to provide a strong force for the outdoors in central Iowa. Thank you for the opportunity to help all our citizens, human and otherwise, have a safe and clean place to live and play in the outdoors!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard A. Leopold". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Richard Leopold
Director
Polk County Conservation



YEAR AT A GLANCE

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Rear view of the newly built
Jester Park Nature Center

Photo of Easter Lake by Robert Hoffman.
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💧 **JESTER PARK NATURE CENTER** *Opens its Doors*

After four years of fundraising and sixteen months of construction, the Jester Park Nature Center opened its doors to the public on August 5, 2018. At the grand opening, visitors were able to explore the new habitat exhibits in the lower level of the center, attend live animal programming, canoe and kayak, and try their hand at air rifle and archery inside the newly renovated Outdoor Recreation and Wellness Center, adjacent from the nature center. More than 5,000 visitors attended a series of four grand opening events. The nature center continues to attract hundreds of people a week with programs, events, and pure curiosity.

💧 **LAKE RESTORATION** *to Breathe New Life into the Community*

Renovations at Easter Lake began in September of 2017 to restore the watershed, clean up the lake waters, renovate the fishery, and more! Improvements included the addition of a multi-use trail that surrounds the lake, shoreline restoration, installation of erosion control mats and riprap, sediment control structures, a new boat ramp rebuild, invasive species control, repairing dam infrastructure, replacement of the bridge and Evergreen Ave. on the dam, and more. The lake began to refill in November of 2018 when the gate valve was closed. Easter Lake has been restored to its full glory and will once again be a shining star on the south side of Des Moines and its community!

💧 **PROTECTING LAND** *for Future Generations*

Polk County Conservation's mission is to provide the citizens of Polk County with quality outdoor recreation, conservation education, and long-term protection of Polk County's natural heritage. During this past year, the long-term protection of Polk County land was a major focus. A total of 1,439 acres was acquired for natural resources restoration, park development, and public use. Added land to our family of parks and trails creates easier access to favorite outdoor spaces, enhances the quality of our waterways, wetlands, woodlands, and prairies, and ensures adequate natural areas for our community now and in the future.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

The 2018 Annual Report includes “highlight” information from July 1, 2017 – December 31, 2018. This is a result of transitioning from a fiscal year report to a calendar year report in 2018.

PARK AND TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

- Brown’s Woods Forest Preserve**
The old hiking bridge along the Wilderness Loop at Brown’s Woods was replaced with a new bridge, connecting the trail over a creek in the fall of 2017.
- Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**
Work to begin restoring wetlands at the newly acquired properties within Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt began in November of 2017. Construction of a large wetland complex west of Highway 65 also began and is expected to be completed in August of 2019. Once completed, the area will consist of 15 acres of wetland and 65 acres of restored prairie.
- Easter Lake Park**
Dredging, shoreline work, in-lake restoration, installation of erosion control mats and riprap, sediment control structures, and fish habitats were completed in Easter Lake in 2018. New concrete was also poured for the Easter Lake Park boat ramp to improve lake access. In November of 2018, the gate valve to the lake was closed, allowing it to naturally fill back up.
- Jester Park**
Along with the construction of the Jester Park Nature Center and Outdoor Recreation and Wellness Center, a streamscape and trail leading from the center to Discovery Pond was created, as well as the addition of a trail from Discovery Pond to Shelter #5. *New park signage was installed at the golf course, lodge, park entrance, equestrian center, nature center, and driving range/minature golf course.
**Project was funded by REAP.*
- Yellow Banks Park**
Improvements to Yellow Banks Park included the addition of a boat ramp and dock, three mini-shelters, fishing pier, CXT restroom, and sidewalk to the trail system around the pond. Site work and grading for the three rental cabins, set to be located on the new east addition near Oakview Pond was completed in the fall of 2018. Restoration work in Oakview Pond and the installation of boardwalk piers was completed in December of 2018; with construction of the cabins anticipated to begin in summer 2019.

Parking, traffic flow, and connection improvements were made to the entry playground area and campground #2. Gravel roads in the campgrounds were converted to asphalt in late 2017. Water and electricity was added to shelters #1 and #2. Lastly, two group campsites became available in 2018.

- Chichaqua Valley Trail**
Polk County Conservation worked with several landowners to develop and improve a section of land near the east I-80/I-35 mixmaster that extended the Chichaqua Valley Trail one mile south connecting it to Broadway Avenue and making room for a new trailhead.
- Mark C. Ackelson Trail**
A 4-mile trail surrounding Easter Lake, named the Mark C. Ackelson Trail, was completed in the fall of 2018. A 440’ pedestrian bridge was also constructed to connect the north and south side of the trail. This multiple span bridge mirrors the bow-string design concept of the other bridges on the trail, but along the railing of the pedestrian bridge, individual bridge plaque sponsors are recognized with a plaque bearing their name or company name, friend or loved ones’ name(s).

Sycamore Trails
Enhancements to the Sycamore Trailhead, off NW 66th in Johnston, were completed in May of 2018. The enhancements consisted of an information panel, bike fix-it repair station, bike rack, a commemorative bench, and trash receptacle.



Improved bridge over the newly acquired and enhanced Oakview Pond at Yellow Banks Park.



*2018 Polk County Conservation
July Youth Corps crew
discovered a painted turtle
during a pond study at Fort Des
Moines Park. This influential
program has crew members
work on projects related to
natural resources in prairies,
woodlands, and wetlands
throughout Polk County.*

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Polk County Conservation welcomed:

- Jessica Burke, *Human Resources Specialist* (Jan. 2018)
- Erich Braun, *Parks Superintendent* (Feb. 2018)
- Carly Routh, *Jester Park Equestrian Center Riding Instructor* (Feb. 2018)
- Curtis Kentner, *Jester Park Equestrian Center Operations Coordinator* (Feb. 2018)
- Molly Ann Moore, *Jester Park Equestrian Center Clerk* (March 2018)
- Janna Coulter, *Youth Corps Coordinator* (May 2018)
- Missy Smith, *Jester Park Nature Center Clerk* (July 2018)
- Jessie Farley, *Natural Resources Technician* (Oct. 2018)
- Claudia Starr, *Jester Park Equestrian Center Manager* (Oct. 2018)
- Jill Altringer, *Polk County Conservation Board Member* (Oct. 2017) – Appointment for 2017 that followed the departure of Chair, Samantha Brear.

Polk County Water Quality Monitoring Program

Polk County Conservation's Water Quality Monitoring Program completed its third year of monitoring in September of 2017. Trained staff and volunteers conducted bi-monthly assessments on 70 sites throughout Polk County. Baseline water quality data for Beaver, Big, Bluff, Camp, Carney, Case Lake Inflow, Crawford, Deer, Des Moines River Trail (at Hartford Ave.), Easter Lake Outlet, Fourmile, Frink, Greenwood Pond Inflow and Outflow Creeks, Golf, Indian, Jordan, Little Beaver, Magnolia, Mud, North Walnut, Paw, Prospect Park (unnamed creeks), Rock, Santiago, Saylor, Spring, Walnut, and Yeader creeks, as well as two drainage ditches, was collected during this past year. The goal of this program is to assess the water quality of watersheds within Polk County; creating a better understanding of the needs of our watershed system.

Conservation Corps

A 10-member team from the Conservation Corps of Iowa began their 10-month term in Polk County Conservation's family of parks and trails in the winter of 2018. Devoting their time to bond-specific projects, these individuals focused primarily on natural resource restoration and park improvements.

Youth Corps

In June of 2018, Polk County Conservation Youth Corps launched its second season of crews into our parks and trails. This program consisted of 27 crew members, ages 15-18, and 3 crew leaders, who worked on projects related to natural resources in prairies, woodlands, and wetlands throughout Polk County for three weeks at a time for a total of 4,620 service hours. The crews completed projects involving invasive species removal, planting native seedlings, picking up trash, repairing trails, and more. They also learned recreation skills such as camping, hiking, canoeing, and fishing.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

RECREATION ENHANCEMENT

🔹 Jester Park Golf Course

The golf course and clubhouse underwent major upgrades as well as new management, C-Corp, in January of 2018. The clubhouse was gutted and remodeled, along with the addition of a banquet room and an outdoor patio with seating to accommodate golf outings. Renovations included updated restrooms, Pro Shop, a full-service commercial kitchen with an expanded menu for the Prairie Grass Bar and Grill, reconfigured service counter, and dine-in seating. A new fleet of electric golf carts was also included within the updates, equipped with Visage GPS units to aid with the pace of play and more.

Course improvements included the addition of two small ponds to hole #11, with a fairway that runs through them continually on this par 5. Two new tees were added to hole #17, clearing the line of sight to the green for better visibility. The irrigation was also replaced for water efficiency and turf growth coverage to create an overall better quality course.

Along with major golf course updates, an 18-hole miniature golf course was added to Jester Park, located next to the driving range. A new cart path was installed connecting the driving range to the golf course clubhouse, allowing for safer access between buildings.

**Partial project was funded by enterprise funds.*



Guests can relax and enjoy beautiful views of the Jester Park Golf Course from the clubhouse's new back patio.

🔹 Jester Park Equestrian Center

Work to improve the Jester Park Equestrian Center with outlot grading, new fencing, storm water management improvement, and the installation of a two inch water main for eight livestock waterers was completed in late fall of 2018. **Partial project was funded by enterprise funds.*



Jester Park Equestrian Center horses enjoying upgraded facilities in fall 2018.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Friends of Jester Park Membership Program

In partnership with the Great Outdoors Foundation, Polk County Conservation launched a new incentive program to provide park users more opportunities for programming and outdoor adventure. Benefits include equipment rental, campsites, and designated fee-based programs discounts at all Polk County Conservation parks, and more. Friends of Jester Park memberships provide supplemental funds needed for operations, to enhance conservation, and improve outdoor recreation programming at Jester Park.

Glow Wild

Polk County Conservation, in partnership with Cumulus Media, hosted the third annual Glow Wild at the newly built Jester Park Nature Center on September 2, 2018. Glow Wild featured popular country music band, Drake White and the Big Fire, horse-drawn wagon rides, educational programming, canoe floats, and much more! Nearly 2,000 people were in attendance.



More than 5,000 visitors celebrated the Jester Park Nature Center grand opening events in the summer of 2018.

Drake White and the Big Fire performing at Glow Wild while the signature bonfire burned bright near the stage.



Jester Park Nature Center Grand Opening

The Jester Park Nature Center opened its doors to the public on August 5, 2018. The new nature center features three main habitat exhibits along with other interactive learning exhibits, classrooms, live animal exhibits, and beautiful views of Jester Park. It is also home to Polk County Conservation's new headquarters.

Along with the construction of the nature center, the former maintenance building, located adjacent to the nature center, was remodeled and transformed into the Outdoor Recreation & Wellness Center. Inside this facility, you will find an air rifle and archery range. There, you can rent summer and winter equipment and purchase ice, firewood, and outdoor gear and clothing.

Honors and Awards

Polk County Conservation Naturalist, Lewis Major, received the Heartland Rising Star Award 2018 for being an artistic and innovative educator, who continues to seek to break the mold in environmental education.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

LAND PROTECTION & RESTORATION

Additional Acreage Added to Our Park System

- A two-acre land donation near the Jester Park Equestrian Center from Susan Ballard, was acquired in July of 2017. This land has become part of the larger publically owned and managed woodland at Jester Park.
- The 19-acre parcel of land lying adjacent to county owned property known as the Gayla Wilson Property, was acquired in August of 2017. This property is old farmland that was overgrown and made up of both upland and floodplain. The restoration of this land will support water quality, wildlife, and recreational goals.
- In partnership with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, a 348-acre farm, known as Crane Meadows, was purchased in November of 2017. This parcel is one of the largest single acquisitions at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Restoration plans include doubling the size of the existing oak savanna, adding 50 acres of wetland, and restoring more than 200 acres of tallgrass prairie. Contributions from REAP, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation and the Mid-Iowa Retriever Club helped to defray acquisition costs for this parcel.
- Forty acres of land that straddles the Skunk River and borders the existing Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt properties on the south and NE corner was purchased in March of 2018. This acreage will be restored to a prairie wetland complex that will provide wildlife habitat.
- The Morgan Property, made up of 74 acres within the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt area, was acquired in July of 2018. This land has several restorable wetland basins, pushes Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt's boundary to a road, and has been identified as a potential location for a new modern campground.
- In partnership with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, a 74-acre parcel of land was added to Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt in May of 2018.

This land adds to our limited upland land base and boasts one of the highest points on the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt landscape. A potentially diverse and important addition, this property includes several restorable wetland features and a portion of Bluff Creek – a drainage that feeds the largest wetland complex at Chichaqua.



Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt features oxbow river channels and backwaters, marshes, wetlands, reconstructed prairies, and native prairie remnants. Chichaqua is the perfect place to teach future generations about the importance of land protection and habitat diversity for wildlife.

- In June of 2018, Polk County experienced a historic single rain event that resulted in extensive flash flooding. One area hit particularly hard was the Fourmile watershed where numerous homes were damaged. In partnership with the City of Des Moines, Polk County Conservation will absorb 687 acres of properties that lie within the 500-year floodplain and include them within the Fourmile Creek Greenbelt Master Plan.



Partnerships with local organizations has allowed for critical land protection and restoration across the county, resulting in increased wildlife within our parks.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

LAND PROTECTION & RESTORATION

- In partnership with Polk County Public Works, Polk County Conservation acquired two properties outside the City of Des Moines, adjacent to the Gay Lea Wilson Trail and within the Fourmile Creek Greenbelt made up of 2.1 and 0.88 acres in October of 2018.
- Kay's Triangle, made up of 82 acres was acquired in November of 2018 within Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Kay's Triangle adjoins another recently acquired and restored parcel – the Mendenhall tract – and provides the opportunity to restore a wetland basin that straddles the properties, in addition to 15+ acres on the interior of the parcel. Over a half mile of Skunk River frontage adds to the value and wildlife appeal of this acquisition.
- Polk County Conservation signed an agreement with the Iowa DNR in February of 2018 to manage Strasser Woods, a state preserve located on the SE side of Des Moines near the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Two-thirds of the area is hardwood timber characterized by white and red oak, shagbark hickory, and many other tree species. The remainder of the area lies in the floodplain of Fourmile Creek and is traversed by the Gay Lea Wilson multi-use trail. Future plans for the area include removal of invasive plant species and realignment/reconstruction of the hiking trail.
- Polk County Conservation acquired two properties (totaling 208 acres) named Trails End Wildlife Area, next to Mally's Park in February of 2018. This area will provide opportunities for natural resources restoration, park development, and public use. Its location between two rapidly growing suburbs – Ankeny and Altoona - and its inclusion in the Fourmile Creek Greenbelt have added tremendous value for Polk County citizens and the environment.
- Directly adjacent to the main entrance of Easter Lake Park, 7 acres of undeveloped land was purchased by Polk County Conservation in the fall of 2018. This land was important for border delineation, water quality protection, future prairie restoration, and public recreation.

Bio Blitz at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

In June of 2018, Polk County Conservation held a bio blitz where scientists and other experts focused on bats, fungi, odenates, herps, fish, and cyperaceae that live at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. A total of 128 species were sampled by 26 professionals and volunteers over the course of three days.

Bird Survey at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Dr. Keith Summerville of Drake University partnered with Polk County Conservation to study grassland bird species on working landscapes surrounding Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt and on control areas within the complex to create a better understanding of the ecological connectivity of the greater Chichaqua landscape and how Polk County Conservation's management can complement that recovery.

Health of Stream Ecosystems Study

In partnership with Dr. Levi from Drake University, research at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt took place over a year-long period to provide an analysis of the ecological value of the work accomplished in specific areas at Chichaqua. Measurements were taken to determine the metabolism and discharge of stream segments across a gradient of agricultural and natural or restored areas over the 2017/2018 year.

Highway 65 Wetland

Polk County Conservation began working on a long-term plan to re-hydrate areas at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. The Highway 65 plan concentrates on improved wetland development and improved wildlife habitat and wetland functionality across management boundaries. This project will increase our wetlands by 3.5 acres and prairie restorations by 13.6 acres.

Monarch Butterfly Research Study

Polk County Conservation collaborated with Dr. Keith Summerville of Drake University at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt for a Monarch Butterfly Research Study, focusing on population ecology, host plant use, and dispersal behavior.



“Prairie Reflections” sculpture by Steve Huffman located at the Jester Park main entrance.

RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT

Pingora Outdoors at Jester Park

In August of 2018, Polk County Conservation went into agreement with local Ankeny outdoor store, Pingora Outdoors to serve as the camp store located within the Outdoor Recreation and Wellness Center. There, you can rent summer and winter equipment, shop for firewood, ice, camping equipment, food items, and clothing.

Public Art

Under the direction of the Polk County Conservation Public Art Committee, two major art pieces were installed at Jester Park. *Prairie Reflections* by Steve Huffman, located near the Jester Park entrance and **Whispers of Nature*, located at the Jester Park Nature Center entrance by Reinaldo Correa now delight park visitors.

**Funded by the Polk County Water & Land Legacy Bond*





GRANTS

The following are grants and reimbursements awarded during the FY17-18. The annual amounts listed are the award totals. Depending upon the grant specifics the award may be received in one year or over a multi-year period.

- **Jester Park Nature Center:**
Iowa Tourism Marketing Grant \$5,000
- **Youth Corps Program: Iowa Native Plant Society** \$925
- **Native Prairie Seed: Prairie Partners Grant** \$42,055
- **Easter Lake Boat Ramp:**
Water Recreation Access Grant \$187,500
- **Air Rifles & Educational Training:**
REAP Conservation Education Program \$14,317
- **Kay's Triangle Acquisition:**
Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant \$232,102
- **Bluff Creek Headlands Acquisition: Sierra Club Donation** \$200
- **Crane Meadows Acquisition:**
Resource Enhancement & Protection \$167,879
National Wild Turkey Federation \$20,000
Mid Iowa Retriever Club \$1,000

BUDGET SUMMARY

The General Basic funds expended for the various departments covered salaries, supplies, and services. The General Supplemental funds covered employee benefits. The Insurance expenditures were for Unemployment Insurance, Workers' Comp Disability, Workers' Comp Medical Expense, and Liability Insurance premiums.

Projects completed or continued with REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) funds were wayfinding signs, various grant matches, support of a naturalist's salary for wildlife research, plus various supplies and equipment. A YAKport for Discovery Pond at Jester Park and the new bison sculpture at the entrance of the new nature center were also purchased with REAP funds. Projects completed or continued with the Polk County Water and Land Legacy (PCWLL) dollars have been highlighted throughout the annual report by the blue water drop designation.

Polk County Conservation continually monitors revenues and expenses to assure budget compliance. In addition, a user fee committee annually reviews the various direct user charges for camping, shelter rentals, educational programs, special events, and other fee based activities to assure that a fair mix of user fee charges and general Polk County taxpayer support is maintained in the annual budget.

A YAKport kayak launch was installed on Discovery Pond at Jester Park to make it easier and safer for kayakers, canoers, and stand up paddle boarders to get in and out of the water.

FINANCIALS

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD FINANCIAL STATEMENT • FY 17/18 – CASH BASIS

REVENUES

	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	PCWLLBond	Enterprise Fund	TOTALS
Property Taxes	\$4,791,739	\$1,230,406	\$60,801	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$6,082,945
Recreational Fees	633,582	0	0	0	0	0	0	633,582
Concessions	55,860	0	0	0	0	0	0	55,860
Miscellaneous Federal Grants	0	0	0	0	0	872,685	0	872,685
Miscellaneous State Grants & Reimbursements	0	0	0	0	7,159	26,450	0	33,609
Land Rent	63,884	0	0	0	0	0	0	63,884
Building & Shelter Rentals	86,499	0	0	0	0	0	0	86,499
Equipment & Machinery Rentals	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	45
Firewood Sales	20,283	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,283
Miscellaneous Sale of Commodities	3,211	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,211
FEMA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Service Fees	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Contributions & Reimb. Other Govts	0	0	0	0	665	833,236	0	833,901
General Administration Fees	12,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	12,000
Fee Based Program Revenues	45,358	0	0	0	0	0	0	45,358
Commissions	476	0	0	0	0	0	0	476
Motor Vehicle Fuel Refunds	11,819	0	0	0	0	0	0	11,819
Miscellaneous Contributions & Donations	0	0	0	0	0	681,649	0	681,649
Miscellaneous Receipts	4,819	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,819
Fixed Assets Sold	15,976	0	0	0	0	36,091	0	52,066
Recoveries on Losses	36,434	0	0	0	0	0	0	36,434
REAP Annual Per Capita Payment	0	0	0	0	110,593	0	0	110,593
Bond Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	10,088,145	0	10,088,145
Golf Course Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	0	106,982	106,982
Jester Park Cabin Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	0	99,274	99,274
Transfers in from Enterprise Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fund Balances Used	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fund Interest	0	0	0	0	1,720	56,483	3,810	62,013
TOTAL REVENUES	\$5,781,985	\$1,230,406	\$60,801	\$—	\$120,136	\$12,594,739	\$210,066	\$19,998,133

EXPENDITURES

	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	PCWLLBond	Enterprise Fund	TOTALS
Conservation Infrastructure/Equip.	\$264,023	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$264,023
Environmental Education	443,432	124,182	0	0	0	0	0	567,614
Natural Resources	794,322	241,226	0	0	0	0	0	1,035,548
Administration	1,121,603	222,583	0	0	0	0	0	1,344,187
Community Outreach	143,022	32,853	0	0	0	0	0	175,875
Conservation Grants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parks Advocacy	1,114,380	266,867	0	0	0	0	0	1,381,247
Construction, Maintenance, Operations	1,239,479	223,310	0	0	0	0	0	1,462,789
Equestrian Center	661,725	119,385	0	0	0	0	0	781,110
Insurance, Unemployment, & Workers Comp. Medical	0	0	60,801	0	0	0	0	60,801
Conservation Special Projects & Development	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resource Enhancement & Protection	0	0	0	0	85,637	0	0	85,637
PCWLL Bond Expenditures	0	0	0	0	0	12,594,739	0	12,594,739
Enterprise Transfer to Operations & Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Golf Course Minor Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,306,987	3,306,987
Jester Park Cabins Minor Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	35,739	35,739
Gain in Fund Balances	0	0	0	0	34,499	0	-3,132,660	-3,098,161
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$5,781,985	\$1,230,406	\$60,801	\$—	\$120,136	\$12,594,739	\$210,066	\$19,998,133

2018 FACTS AND FIGURES

PARK VISITATION (where recorded)

Brown's Woods	95,361
Carney Marsh	31,650
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt	133,114
Chichaqua Valley Trail	45,143
Easter Lake Park	574,052
Fort Des Moines Park	282,511
Four Mile Creek Greenbelt	17,295
Gay Lea Wilson Trail	21,696
Great Western Trail	23,684
High Trestle Trail	32,669
<i>(near PCC gazebo area)</i>	

Jester Park 626,946
(includes Mile Long Boat Ramp, Golf Course, Equestrian Center, Nature Center, and Lodge)

Mally's Park	34,154
Thomas Mitchell Park	151,722
Trestle to Trestle Trail	53,210
Yellow Banks Park	279,873

Total Park Visitation 2,375,904+

**PCC is unable to accurately calculate total park visitation from traffic counters. The estimated visitation total of 2,279,747+ people reflects only those parks equipped with counters or alternative ways for tracking visitation.*

RENTAL FACILITY RESERVATIONS

Chichaqua Longhouse	75
Easter Lake Park Shelters <i>(closed for renovation in 2018)</i>	
Fort Des Moines Park Shelters	178
Jester Park Shelters	307
Jester Park Lodge	70
Mally's Park	13
Thomas Mitchell Park Shelters	126
Yellow Banks Shelters	60
Jester Park Cabins	881

TOTAL Facility Reservations 1,710

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- 1,207 school programs involving 18,844 students
- 239 youth programs involving 4,285 youth
- 6 public camp programs involving 81 youth
- 63 adult programs involving 1,871 adults
- 106 family programs involving 4,562 participants
- 5 bus trips involving 237 participants

The Environmental Education staff connected with various audiences for a total of 39,149 hours.

VOLUNTEER HOURS CONTRIBUTED

Hundreds of volunteers contribute thousands of hours to conservation efforts throughout our family of parks and trails. These dedicated individuals make up the various corporate groups, scout troops, park stewards, trail ambassadors, collegiate classes/clubs and others that put in over 14,000+ hours in total this past year with Polk County Conservation. In Iowa, volunteer hours are valued at \$22.73/hour, totaling \$318,220 worth of work accomplished by volunteers.



Polk County Conservation annually hosts a National Trails Day event on the first Saturday in June to attract new trail users and help connect existing trail enthusiasts with local clubs and organizations.



BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

ADMINISTRATION

Richard Leopold, *Director*
 Douglas Romig, *Deputy Director*
 Adam Fendrick, *Park Planner*
 Carol Ann Carlson, *Senior Accountant*
 Cindy Lentz, *Administrative Supervisor*
 Jessica Burke,
Human Resource Specialist
 Ginny Malcomson,
Administration Specialist
 Missy Smith, *Nature Center Clerk*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Kami Rankin,
Community Relations Coordinator

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Patrice Petersen-Keys,
Environmental Ed. Coordinator
 Heidi Anderson, *Naturalist*
 Lewis Major, *Naturalist*
 Joe Boyles, *Naturalist*
 Lori Foresman-Kirpes, *Naturalist*
 Janna Coulter, *Youth Corps Coordinator*

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mark Dungan,
Natural Resources Manager
 Doug Sheeley,
Conservation Ecologist
 Pat Spain, *Volunteer Coordinator*
 Melissa Schmeling, *Volunteer Coordinator*
 Lael Neal, *Natural Resources Technician*
 Travis Maak, *Natural Resources Technician*
 Jessie Farley, *Natural Resources Technician*
 Al Pasker, *Natural Resources Technician*
 Dan Hrubes, *Natural Resources Technician*
 Shawn Warren, *Natural Resources Technician*
 Chris Lunan, *Natural Resources Technician*

BOARD MEMBERS

Jim Cataldo, *Chair*
 Diana Baratta, *Vice-Chair*
 Jill Altringer, *Secretary*
 Tom Levis
 Lance Northway

PARKS DIVISION

Erich Braun, *Parks Superintendent*
 Dean Bruscher, *Conservation Park Ranger*
 Brian Herrstrom, *Conservation Park Ranger*
 Charlie Finch, *Conservation Park Ranger*
 David Weidt, *Conservation Park Ranger*
 James Dotzler, *Conservation Park Ranger*
 Eric Baker, *Maintenance Technician*
 Tyler Naeve, *Maintenance Technician*
 Chance Patrick, *Maintenance Technician*

CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE, AND OPERATIONS

Wayne Johnson,
Construction Maintenance Manager
 Gary Halbersma,
Construction Maintenance Super.
 George Lentz,
Equipment Maintenance Super.
 Ken Young, *Mechanic*
 Luke Harshbarger, *Mechanic*
 Steve Haefner, *Construction Technician*
 Barney Feezell, *Construction Technician*
 Brent Hansen, *Construction Technician*

JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER

Claudia Starr, *Equestrian Center Manager*
 Liz Beatty, *Barn Supervisor*
 Molly Mellinger, *Program Coordinator*
 Carly Routh, *Riding Instructor*
 Curtis Kentner, *Operations Coordinator*
 Molly Ann Moore, *Equestrian Center Clerk*

The Polk County Conservation Board is made up of five independent members appointed by the Polk County Board of Supervisors. Serving five year terms, each member of the board represents a different geographic district of Polk County.

(*Current as of February 2019)



POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION

12130 NW 128th Street
Granger, IA 50109

ph: (515) 323-5300
fax: (515) 323-5354

pccb_info@polkcountyiowa.gov
www.leadingyououtdoors.org

