

*Leading you Outdoors*

# ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2010 - JUNE 2011



# YEAR AT A GLANCE



After successfully developing a master plan for Jester Park in 2009, Polk County Conservation began planning efforts for two of our popular Eastern Polk County parks...Thomas Mitchell Park and Yellow Banks Park. The goal of these master plans is to guide future park development. Park master plans provide a means to determine the best uses for a park and to optimize management of the park's natural and human made resources. Plans provide long-range vision for approximately 10-20 years. These two plans were Board approved in February of 2011 following a nine month planning, design, and outreach process. The staff and Board would like to thank the public for their comments and suggestions. The next master plan slated for the coming year will be for Fort Des Moines Park.

Planning efforts on a broader scale took shape between the Conservation Board and the Polk County Board of Supervisors. A joint meeting was held to open discussions about expectations, goals, current and future needs. Increased interaction between the Boards and amongst our Board allows for greater education, cooperation and efficiencies. Joint annual meetings are expected to take place in the future.

One conversation topic at this joint meeting and a commonality between most County departments during the summer of 2010 was flooding. Significant rainfall impacted Central IA which caused more than \$1 million dollars worth of damage to Conservation properties and facilities. Rainfall totals were just shy of breaking records set during the floods of 1993. Almost all parks and trails suffered some kind of damage due to flooding along the Des Moines and Skunk Rivers. The most heavily damaged parks were Thomas Mitchell, Jester and the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Nearly all of Chichaqua was impacted by the flood water. The Chichaqua Valley Trail had 27 washouts in 3 ½ miles while some sections of the trail were completely washed away. Serious damage to the Chichaqua Longhouse, campground, maintenance shops, residence, dikes and roads occurred. Flood debris and siltation removal, additional erosion controls, and culvert repairs were needed at many other parks and trails.



Chichaqua Valley Trail flood washout that is 100 feet across and 20 feet deep.

# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Master Plans were approved for Thomas Mitchell and Yellow Banks Parks in February of 2011. RDG Planning and Design was hired to provide the narrative and graphic support services for the plans.
- Jim Cataldo began his Board member term in April of 2011. He replaced Barry Vosler.
- Chris Clingan was hired in April of 2011 as a full-time Assistant Park Ranger.
- The Conservation Board became included in the County's master insurance program that is administered through Risk Management. Canceling our independent policy was a cost savings to the County.



Board Member,  
Jim Cataldo

Assistant Park  
Ranger,  
Chris Clingan



## RECREATION ENHANCEMENT

- Pre-engineering work began on the Des Moines to Ankeny section of the Gay Lea Wilson Trail.
- Planning efforts began for the Jester Park Accessible Outdoor Project, in conjunction with fisheries improvements at Two Dam Pond. Proposed features include an accessible trail around the pond, canoe launch, fishing pier, and expanded parking. A one-acre wetland will be constructed to help improve Two Dam Pond's water quality, along with pond dredging and the addition of three stabilization structures. Proposed improvements would take place in 2012.
- Fundraising efforts began to acquire and construct a trail on a 5.75 mile section of Union Pacific railroad located between Bondurant and Des Moines. This section would connect the Chichaqua Valley Trail to the Gay Lea Wilson Trail. The purchase and development of this segment will further implement a nearly 20 year goal of a 100-mile Central Iowa Trail Loop.
- A Vision Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism Program marketing grant was awarded to PCC to assist with promotional efforts for the High Trestle Trail Grand Celebration that took place on April 30, 2011. More than 5,000 trail users and community residents celebrated the official grand opening of this 25 mile trail that spans from Woodward to Ankeny.
- Knapp properties began negotiations with PCC to relocate a portion of the Great Western Trail. The reroute would bring about a new trailhead and parking lot for trail users.

# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

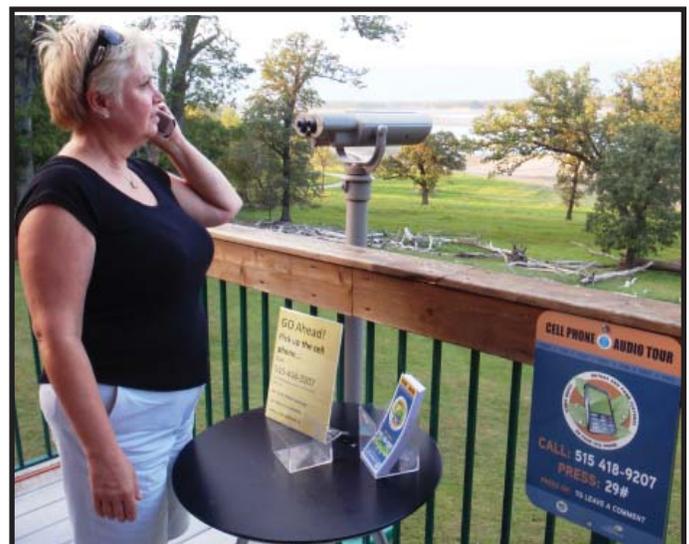
## EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- PCC partnered with the Great Outdoors Fund to develop a television marketing campaign that encouraged the public to “Get Outside” in a County park and take part in an outdoor recreation activity. Monthly commercials were produced in house by staff and aired weekly for one year.
- PCC also partnered with IA Health- Des Moines in the Fall of 2010 to begin a series of outdoor health related programs called Do More Outdoors. These seasonal special events are held at a Conservation Board park or trail and highlight 3-4 outdoor activities that promote healthy lifestyles.
- An innovative cell phone park tour program was piloted in Jester Park and Brown’s Woods through a REAP grant. Guide By Cell signage was installed in a variety of key locations within the parks where interpretation and education could take place via a cell phone. Natural Resource interpretation, historical information, and general park information were just a few topics that were addressed 24/7 using the signage. The program was a huge success.
- On the heels of wrapping up a South Des Moines Superblock concept, PCC and Des Moines Public Schools began exploring the potential for an outdoor classroom on an 18 acre piece of land in between Fort Des Moines Park and Studebaker Elementary School. Proposed plans would include a network of hiking trails, prairie, wetland, and woodland education areas, open air shelter, natural amphitheater, and expanded parking.

Do More Outdoors at Easter Lake Park



Guide By Cell at the Jester Park Lodge



# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

## LAND PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

- Restoration work began on the Thomas Mitchell Park pond thanks to funding from the Watershed Improvement Review Board, NRCS, and the IA DNR. Three sediment basins were installed, the pond was drained and dredged, and fish habitat features were integrated into the plan. Once the pond fills back up following the dredging process, natural vegetation and wildlife will be restored in and around the pond. During this improvement process, 10 acres of land west of the park was purchased. The property was needed to allow for the construction of the sediment basins.
- Eagle Roost Wildlife Area, a 357-acre property adjacent to the Highway 65 bypass in Eastern Polk County was acquired by Polk County as a gift from the IA DNR. This natural area on both sides of the bypass is composed of cropland, wetland, and riparian woodland. Wildlife observation and hunting are the principal recreation activities.
- The Beaver Creek Greenbelt was established to provide protection for a large rookery of Great Blue Herons. That nesting colony was destroyed by a strong storm and the site was abandoned due to a lack of suitable large trees. The colony has dispersed to other sites up and down stream on the creek. The rules established at the time of acquisition prohibited entry during nesting season to protect the herons. Those prohibitions were no longer necessary and the area was reopened on a yearlong basis as long as the herons do not return.
- The Ted Ferris Estate offered to support the purchase of the "Shaw" property adjacent to Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. The estate offered a donation of \$300,000 to help complete the purchase.



Thomas Mitchell Park Pond Restoration

Beaver Creek Greenbelt Heron Rookery



# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- Site preparation began for cabin construction at Jester Park. Electric service was installed at the proposed site located across from Two Dam Pond.
- PCC contracted with Snyder & Associates to complete site inspections and prepare a preliminary and final design for repairs associated with the Chichaqua Valley Trail. The trail sustained major flood damage in 2010.
- On-site wastewater treatment systems were installed at the Thomas Mitchell Park playground restroom and Yellow Banks Park Campground #1 showerhouse.
- A new open air shelter was constructed at Yellow Banks Park in between the two ballfields. The shelter's occupancy is 75 people and is equipped with lights and electric outlets. It is also close in proximity to the playground and vault toilet.
- Mally's Park Phase I site improvements took shape in the Spring of 2011. New features included an open air picnic shelter with grills and picnic tables, drinking fountain, vault toilet, expanded parking lot, and an entrance sign. As future funding becomes available, a play area and trailhead amenities will be constructed to enhance this proposed major trail intersection.



Golf Course Capital Improvements

## RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT

- In response to our growing miles of paved trails, PCC purchased various types of trail repair and maintenance equipment that will be used to maintain more than 34+ miles of trail in the coming years.
- HG Golf Properties continued with contracted capital improvements at the Jester Park Golf Course for sand bunker renovation, new tee construction, drainage and irrigation improvements, on holes 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13 and 14. Investors and ownership of HG Golf Properties changed hands in October of 2010, now going by the name of Green Golf Partners.

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## REVENUE

REVENUES:	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	Golf Course	TOTALS
<b>Property Taxes</b>	<b>\$ 3,071,970</b>	<b>\$ 841,238</b>	<b>\$ 213,547</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 4,126,754</b>
Recreational Fees	563,940	0	0	0	0	0	563,940
Concessions	44,937	0	0	0	0	0	44,937
Environmental Protection Agency Grants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Federal Grants	0	0	0	1,498,510	0	0	1,498,510
Miscellaneous State Grants & Reimbursements	54,525	0	0	644,569	0	0	699,094
Land Rent	66,880	0	0	0	0	0	66,880
Building & Shelter Rentals	108,395	0	0	0	0	0	108,395
Equipment & Machinery Rentals	974	0	0	0	0	0	974
Firewood Sales	13,550	0	0	0	0	0	13,550
Miscellaneous Sale of Commodities	22,973	0	0	0	0	0	22,973
FEMA	189,195	0	0	0	0	0	189,195
Service Fees	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
Miscellaneous Contributions & Reimb. Other Govts	26,200	0	0	0	0	0	26,200
General Administration Fees	12,000	0	0	0	0	0	12,000
Fee Based Program Revenues	58,984	0	0	0	0	0	58,984
Commissions	1,818	0	0	0	0	191,468	193,286
Motor Vehicle Fuel Refunds	6,245	0	0	0	0	0	6,245
Miscellaneous Contributions & Donations	44,355	0	0	100	0	0	44,455
Miscellaneous Receipts	4,412	0	0	0	0	0	4,412
Fixed Assets Sold	9,156	0	0	0	0	0	9,156
Recoveries on Losses	110,966	0	0	0	0	0	110,966
REAP Annual Per Capita Payment	0	0	0	0	130,483	0	130,483
REAP Videocast Grant	0	0	0	0	2,006	0	2,006
REAP Guide by Cell Grant	0	0	0	0	7,834	0	7,834
REAP Land Purchase Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fund Interest	0	0	0	0	456	2,318	2,774
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$ 4,411,575</b>	<b>\$ 841,238</b>	<b>\$ 213,547</b>	<b>\$ 2,143,179</b>	<b>\$ 140,779</b>	<b>\$ 193,786</b>	<b>\$ 7,944,103</b>

## GRANTS

The following are grants and reimbursements awarded during FY 10-11. The annual amounts listed are the award totals. Depending upon the grant specifics the award may be received in one year or over multi-years.

Prairie Meadows-Equestrian Center	\$5,600
Iowa Association of Naturalists-Jester Park Hickory Ridge Trail Sculpture	\$500
DNR-Jester Park Two Dam Pond Fish Habitat	\$25,125
DNR- Archery Grant	\$1,200
Vision Iowa- High Trestle Trail Grand Celebration Marketing	\$2,208
MPO- Easter Lake Park Trail Grant (2015)	\$159,232

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## EXPENDITURES

EXPENDITURES:	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	Golf Course	TOTALS
Conservation Infrastructure/Equipment	\$ 137,690	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 137,690
Environmental Education	381,596	95,641	0	0	0	0	477,237
Natural Resources	880,827	197,257	0	0	0	0	1,078,084
Administration	1,053,985	102,355	0	0	0	0	1,156,340
Community Outreach	191,027	34,869	0	0	0	0	225,896
Parks Advocacy	464,263	133,644	0	0	0	0	597,906
Construction, Maintenance, Operations	865,677	200,971	0	0	0	0	1,066,648
Equestrian Center	422,329	76,501	0	0	0	0	498,830
CBG Haying Operations	14,181	0	0	0	0	0	14,181
Insurance, Unemployment, & Workers Comp. Medical	0	0	213,547	0	0	0	213,547
Conservation Land Acquisition & Development	0	0	0	3,221,319	0	0	3,221,319
Resource Enhancement & Protection	0	0	0	0	143,231	0	143,231
					0	407,430	407,430
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$ 4,411,575</b>	<b>\$ 841,238</b>	<b>\$ 213,547</b>	<b>\$ 3,221,319</b>	<b>\$ 143,231</b>	<b>\$ 407,430</b>	<b>\$ 9,238,339</b>

## 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 the Reserve funds were asphalt overlay for roads, Mally's Park upgrades, Yellow Banks campground #2 upgrades, and the Trestle to Trestle trail repairs. Master plans were also completed for Yellow Banks Park and Thomas Mitchell Park. Also purchased were trail maintenance equipment, various conservation vehicles and property at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Polk County Conservation Board continues construction and repairs of trails throughout Polk County.

Projects completed or continued with REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) funds were way finding signs, Yellow Banks pit latrine and septic, Thomas Mitchell septic at the playground, the start of rental cabins at Jester Park, support of a naturalist's salary for wildlife research, plus various smaller projects throughout all areas.

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.

# FACTS AND FIGURES

## PARK VISITATION (WHERE RECORDED)

Brown's Woods	52,346
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt	32,498
Chichaqua Valley Trail (closed)	4,192
Easter Lake Park	409,526
Fort Des Moines Park	152,457
Four Mile Creek Greenbelt	4,192
Jester Park	284,577
(includes Golf Course and Equestrian Center visitors)	
Mally's Park	9,571
Thomas Mitchell Park	110,373
Yellow Banks Park	266,199

\*TOTAL PARK VISITATION 1,323,864+

\*PCC is unable to accurately calculate total park visitation from traffic counters. The estimated visitation total of 1,323,864 people reflects only those parks equipped with counters or alternative ways for tracking visitation.

## RENTAL FACILITY RESERVATIONS

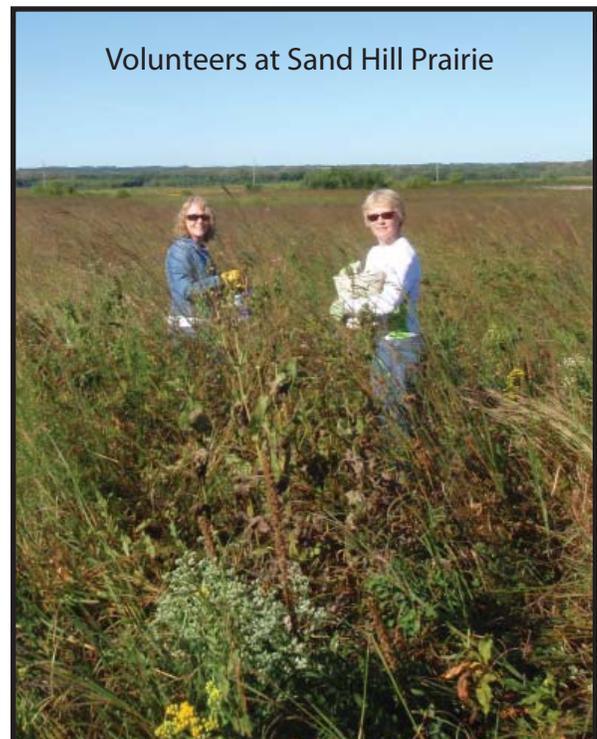
Chichaqua Longhouse	64
Easter Lake Park (Shelters #1-#5)	244
Fort Des Moines Park (Shelters #1-#2)	116
Jester Park (Shelters #2-#6)	234
Jester Park Lodge	132
Thomas Mitchell Park (Shelters #1-#2)	94
Yellow Banks Park (Shelters #1-#3)	67
TOTAL FACILITY RESERVATIONS	951

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

1,041 school programs	-24,666 students
191 youth programs	-4,267
58 adult programs	-2,373
70 family programs	-4,229
43% Programs Held Outdoors	
81% Participant Satisfaction Rate	

## VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

10,200 hours



# UNIT DIRECTORY

(as of June 2012)

## Polk County Conservation Administration Office

11407 NW Jester Park Dr.  
Granger, IA 50109  
(515) 323-5300 (515) 323-5354 fax  
pccb\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov  
www.leadingyououtdoors.org

## Administration /Front Office

Dennis Parker, Director  
Carol Ann Carlson, Accountant  
Cindy Lentz, Administrative Supervisor  
Melissa Ritter, Account Clerk  
Ginny Malcomson, P/T Account Clerk

## Community Outreach

Kami Rankin, Community Outreach Supervisor  
Pat Spain, Planning and Outreach Coordinator

## Environmental Education

Patrice Petersen-Keys, Environmental Education Coord.  
Heidi Anderson, Naturalist  
Lewis Major, Naturalist  
Joe Boyles, Naturalist  
Lori Foresman-Kirpes, Naturalist

## Natural Resources

Loren Lown, Natural Resources Specialist  
Mark Dungan, Natural Resources Manager  
Doug Sheeley, Natural Resources Supervisor  
Ron Ugolini, Natural Resources Technician  
Chris Lunan, Natural Resources Technician  
Scott Gehl, Natural Resources Technician  
Al Pasker, Natural Resources Technician  
Dan Hrubes, Natural Resources Technician  
Lael Neal, P/T Natural Resources Technician Worker

## Board Members

Tina Hadden  
Tom Levis  
Michelle McEnany  
Mike Smith  
Jim Cataldo

## Parks Advocacy

Mark Hurm, Lead Ranger  
Dean Bruscher, Ranger  
Brian Herrstrom, Ranger  
Charlie Finch, Ranger  
Chris Clingan, Assistant Ranger  
James Dotzler, Assistant Ranger

## Construction, Maintenance, & Operations

Wayne Johnson, Construction & Maintenance Manager  
Stan Manning, Special Services Technician  
George Lentz, Equipment Maintenance Supervisor  
Ken Young, Mechanic  
Brad Talbert, P/T Assistant Mechanic  
Steve Haefner, Construction Technician  
Tim Wears, Maintenance Technician  
Tyler Naeve, Maintenance Technician  
Chance Patrick, Maintenance Technician

## Leisure Services

Carrie Spain, Equestrian Center Manager  
Dennis Crowley, Barn Manager  
Deb Crowley, P/T Stable Laborer II  
Deanne Mundt, P/T Stable Laborer II  
Dean Simmons, P/T Stable Laborer I