

Leading you Outdoors

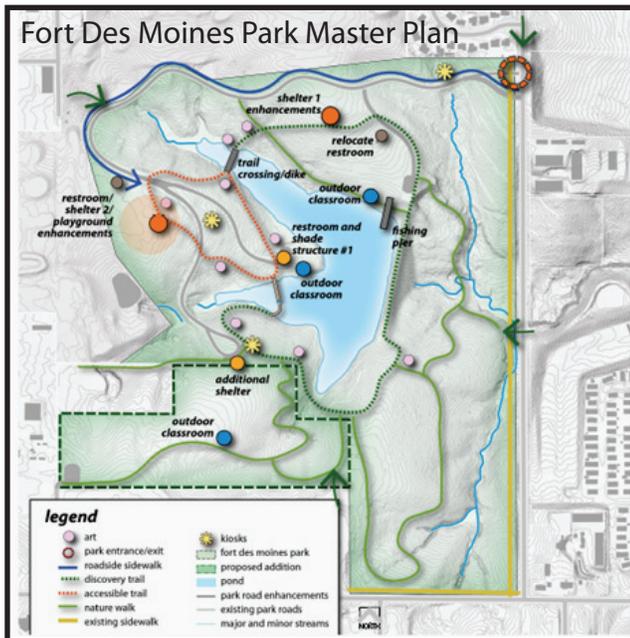
ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2011 - JUNE 2012



Photo courtesy of Robert Hoffman

YEAR AT A GLANCE



Fort Des Moines was the fifth park to go through master planning efforts during the summer and fall of 2011. 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. The staff and Board would like to thank the public for their involvement.

Planning efforts on a broader scale took shape on two fronts this past year. First in September of 2011, the launch of The Tomorrow Plan was held. The Tomorrow Plan is a regional planning effort focused on the sustainable development of Greater Des Moines. It involves residents and local leaders in identifying visions and aspirations for the region, exploring potential scenarios for its future, and setting a preferred direction for sustainable future development. PCC board members, staff, and advocates played a key role in giving conservation and outdoor recreation a strong voice in this new and exciting regional plan.

Second, discussions began between PCC, the Trust for Public Land, and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to explore supplementary funding options for conservation and outdoor recreation efforts in Polk County. The growth of Polk County demands a need for improved water quality, parks, trails, and the protection of our remaining natural areas.

Limited financial resources continued to generate a need for grants, private funding, and volunteer assistance. Many fabulous projects such as the Thomas Mitchell Park pond restoration, Jester Park Amphitheater and Elk & Bison Exhibit grand openings, Two Dam Pond renovation, Mally's Park improvements, and Fort Des Moines Park Outdoor Classroom land acquisition were all made possible with external funding and staff support. A sincere thank you is extended to these funders, community partners, and volunteers that help us make great things happen in our parks and trails.



Jester Park Amphitheater Grand Opening

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A master plan was approved for Fort Des Moines Park in February of 2012. RDG Planning and Design was hired to provide the narrative and graphic support services for the plan.
- Tina Mowry Hadden ended her term as Conservation Board member in June of 2012 after fulfilling 6 1/2 years of service.



Elk and Bison Educational Plaza

RECREATION ENHANCEMENT

- The 4.25 mile Oralabor Gateway Trail that safely connects the Gay Lea Wilson to the Neal Smith Trails south of Ankeny was opened to the public. It also provides an important connection to the High Trestle Trail via Ankeny city trails.
- Construction began for the Jester Park Accessible Outdoor Project, in conjunction with fisheries improvements at Two Dam Pond. 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.
- PCC acquired the 5.75 mile section of Union Pacific railroad located between Bondurant and Des Moines for trail purposes. This section will connect the Chichaqua Valley Trail to the Gay Lea Wilson Trail.
- A Grand Opening celebration took place on May 23rd for the Jester Park Elk & Bison Educational Plaza. Improvements to this historic exhibit included an accessible observation deck, educational displays, spotting scopes, high quality art components, and an inviting viewing area.
- Jester Park equestrian trail improvements were funded through grant dollars. Trail access and sustainability were improved dramatically.
- Polk County Conservation and the City of Des Moines continued partnership efforts to secure funding and finalize plans for future construction of the Easter Lake Trail.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- PCC accepted an 18.5-acre piece of land from Des Moines Public Schools between Fort Des Moines Park and Studebaker Elementary to create an outdoor classroom. Future amenities include a network of hiking trails, natural resource development of prairie, wetland, and woodland for education areas, an open air shelter, natural amphitheater, and expanded parking and access.
- PCC partnered with “I Have A Dream” (IHAD) students in a program called Active Dreamers. IHAD identifies and “adopts” groups of low-income elementary school children deemed to be at high risk of becoming school dropouts and mentors them through graduation and pursuing a higher education or a fulfilling career. PCC got involved with the Active Dreamers program to help introduce them to new and diverse outdoor recreational activities, and highlight the importance of staying active while having fun and learning about nature.
- After Guide by Cell, an innovative park tour program, was piloted in 2010 at Jester Park and Brown’s Woods it expanded to 13 PCC parks, trails and natural areas in 2011. Since inception more than 5,900 callers have listened to 7,000 audio messages on natural history and unique park features. Hundreds of callers have taken time to leave feedback and share their thoughts. Callers representing 42 states have heard over 175 hours of messages. 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. QR codes were added to some signs. When scanned on a cell phone these codes link users to a web page, video or picture with extended park information.

Future Fort Des Moines Park Outdoor Classroom



Active Dreamers at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt



ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

LAND PROTECTION AND RESTORATION



Restored Thomas Mitchell Park Pond

- Restoration work was completed 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. The pond was stocked with fish by the IDNR and will be open to public fishing in 2013.
- PCC signed a contract with the IDNR and City of Des Moines to hire a consultant to develop a water quality plan for Easter Lake and its watershed. A technical steering committee and citizen advisory committee were established and provided much of the background needed to begin development of the watershed plan.
- PCC partnered with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to acquire two properties. A 6-acre property adjacent to the Gay Lea Wilson Trail and Four Mile Creek Greenbelt in Pleasant Hill, along with a 39-acre property adjacent to Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt were acquired for conservation purposes.
- Water quality and fishery improvements began at Two Dam Pond in Jester Park. Funding from a Land and Water Conservation grant and DNR fisheries grant was used to drain and dredge this 2.8-acre pond, install grade stabilization structures, construct a one-acre sediment basin wetland, and improve fish habitat. Additional accessible recreation amenities will be added to this area for park users and environmental education programming. This project will be completed in 2013.



Fishery Improvements at Jester Park's Two Dam Pond

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Eagle scouts were busy at Jester Park constructing a new outdoor amphitheater and two walk-in campsites. The amphitheater grand opening was held on July 5th in conjunction with a Jazz in July concert. The primitive campsites were designed for campers that desire more privacy when enjoying the outdoors. Many partners assisted with these fabulous projects.
- PCC continued working with FEMA and Jasper County on repairs associated with the Chichaqua Valley Trail. The trail sustained major flood damage in 2010.
- Shelters #5 & #6 at Jester Park were equipped with water and electricity. Increased use in the back of the park as a result of the natural playscape and elk and bison exhibit warranted improved utilities to these facilities for the public.
- Mally's Park improvements continued in 2012. New features included an open air picnic shelter with grills and picnic tables, drinking fountain, vault toilet, expanded parking lot, a playground, and an entrance sign. As future funding becomes available, trailhead amenities will be constructed to enhance this proposed major trail intersection.
- Easter Lake spillway and gate control repairs, along with parking lot improvements were made during the summer of 2011. Recreational activities such as fishing and trail usage will benefit from expanded and improved parking at the spillway and beach.



Mally's Park Restroom & Shelter

RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT

- PCC signed a five year joint service agreement for maintenance repairs on the High Trestle Trail with the cities of Ankeny, Madrid, Sheldahl, Slater, Woodward, and Boone, Story, Dallas, and Polk County Conservation Boards.



High Trestle Trail

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

REVENUE

REVENUES:	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	Golf Course	TOTALS
Property Taxes	\$ 3,194,317	\$ 902,560	\$ 115,105	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,211,981
Recreational Fees	606,478	0	0	0	0	0	606,478
Concessions	46,761	0	0	0	0	0	46,761
Environmental Protection Agency Grants		0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Federal Grants	35,346	0	0	377,555	0	0	412,901
Miscellaneous State Grants & Reimbursements	219,539	0	0	994,646	0	0	1,214,185
Land Rent	112,315	0	0	0	0	0	112,315
Building & Shelter Rentals	80,952	0	0	0	0	16,100	97,052
Equipment & Machinery Rentals	1,901	0	0	0	0	0	1,901
Firewood Sales	16,188	0	0	0	0	0	16,188
Miscellaneous Sale of Commodities	13,170	0	0	0	0	0	13,170
FEMA	74,133	0	0	0	0	0	74,133
Service Fees		0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Contributions & Reimb. Other Govts	27,940	0	0	0	0	0	27,940
General Administration Fees	11,000	0	0	0	0	0	11,000
Fee Based Program Revenues	61,838	0	0	0	0	0	61,838
Commissions	2,772	0	0	0	0	204,409	207,181
Motor Vehicle Fuel Refunds	8,393	0	0	0	0	0	8,393
Miscellaneous Contributions & Donations	947	0	0	456,521	275	0	457,743
Miscellaneous Receipts	8,379	0	0	0	0	0	8,379
Fixed Assets Sold	4,049	0	0	0	0	0	4,049
Recoveries on Losses	8,335	0	0	0	0	0	8,335
REAP Annual Per Capita Payment	0	0	0	0	102,682	0	102,682
REAP DNR Fishing & Hunting Grant	0	0	0	0	3,345	0	3,345
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fund Interest	0	0	0	0	109	536	645
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 4,534,753	\$ 902,560	\$ 115,105	\$ 1,828,722	\$ 106,411	\$ 221,046	\$ 7,708,596

GRANTS

The following are grants and reimbursements awarded during FY 11-12. 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.

State Rec. Trails- Easter Lake Trail	\$159,232
State Rec. Trails- Acquisition of the Chichaqua Valley Trail Connector	\$753,750
DNR Hunting and Fishing Grant (EE)	\$5,000
State Transportation Enhancement- Construction of the Chichaqua Valley Trail Connector	\$750,000
Community Development Grant- Yellow Banks Park Ballfield	\$21,800
Community Betterment Grant- Trestle to Trestle Trail River Place Trailhub	\$5,000

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

EXPENDITURES

EXPENDITURES:	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	Golf Course	TOTALS
Conservation Infrastructure/Equipment	\$ 95,675	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 95,675
Environmental Education	437,237	101,404	0	0	0	0	538,641
Natural Resources	1,072,510	209,619	0	0	0	0	1,282,129
CBG Haying Operations	29,435	0	0	0	0	0	29,435
Administration	886,875	112,590	0	0	0	0	999,464
Community Outreach	184,057	37,188	0	0	0	0	221,245
Conservation Grants	3,283	0	0	0	0	0	3,283
Parks Advocacy	460,515	147,258	0	0	0	0	607,773
Construction, Maintenance, Operations	907,894	214,391	0	0	0	0	1,122,285
Equestrian Center	457,274	80,109	0	0	0	0	537,383
Insurance, Unemployment, & Workers Comp. Medical	0	0	115,105	0	0	0	115,105
Conservation Land Acquisition & Development	0	0	0	1,131,186	0	0	1,131,186
Resource Enhancement & Protection	0	0	0	0	162,686	0	162,686
Golf Course Minor Repairs & Maintenance					0	6,055	6,055
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 4,534,753	\$ 902,560	\$ 115,105	\$ 1,131,186	\$ 162,686	\$ 6,055	\$ 6,852,345

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, Jester Park shelter #5 & #6 upgrades with water and electric, and restoration, protection & seeding at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. An amphitheater was constructed at Jester Park and work was done on the dikes and trail at Thomas Mitchell Park. An ADA sidewalk was put in to the shelter at the Jester Park Equestrian Center. Monies from the Reserve funds were also used for various grant matches. Also purchased were equipment and various conservation vehicles. 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 wayfinding signs, equipment purchases, traffic counters for various trails and parks, radio upgrades, a master plan was developed for Fort Des Moines, Park, continued work on 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	52,934
Carney Marsh	6,016
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt	50,429
Chichaqua Valley Trail (closed)	1,135
Easter Lake Park	361,508
Fort Des Moines Park	138,292
Four Mile Creek Greenbelt	2,677
Gay Lea Wilson Trail	8,896
Great Western Trail	12,032
Jester Park	367,724
(includes Golf Course, Equestrian Center and Lodge)	
Mally's Park	19,425
Thomas Mitchell Park	190,814
Yellow Banks Park	315,980

*TOTAL PARK VISITATION 1,527,862+

*PCC is unable to accurately calculate total park visitation from traffic counters. The estimated visitation total of 1,527,862 people reflects only those parks equipped with counters or alternative ways for tracking visitation.

RENTAL FACILITY RESERVATIONS

Chichaqua Longhouse	62
Easter Lake Park (Shelters #1-#5)	293
Fort Des Moines Park (Shelters #1-#2)	132
Jester Park (Shelters #2-#6)	263
Jester Park Lodge	109
Mally's Park (opened Summer of 2012)	3
Thomas Mitchell Park (Shelters #1-#2)	114
Yellow Banks Park (Shelters #1-#4)	82

TOTAL FACILITY RESERVATIONS 1,058

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

1,174 school programs involving
25,402 students
210 youth programs involving
6,348 youth
64 adult programs involving
2,068 adults
94 family programs involving
5,425 families

59% Programs Held Outdoors
97% Participant Satisfaction Rate

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS CONTRIBUTED

11,000 hours
Estimated value: \$187,000



Volunteers checking bluebird boxes

UNIT DIRECTORY

(as of December 2012)

Polk County Conservation Administration Office

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www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Administration

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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

Sara Kurovski
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
Barney Feezell, 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