

Leading you Outdoors

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2012 - JUNE 2013

date to remember...

November 6, 2012

**BOND
PASSED**



YEAR AT A GLANCE



November 6th, 2012, was a historic day for Polk County Conservation and its constituents. Months of planning were not in vain as we saw voters support the Polk County Water & Land Legacy Bond (PCWLL), passing the measure by 72%. This large margin of victory showed that there is bipartisan support for critical water quality, wildlife, trails, and recreation projects.

As you'll see in the next few pages, we were immediately able to put real projects on the ground within the first year of passing the bond.

Sensitive natural areas were successfully acquired from willing landowners that will play an important role to improve water quality and provide quality wildlife habitat. Additionally, we continued to pursue some significant trail connections throughout the county and tackle some recreation and education projects that were categorized as high priority in our park master plans.

More than 500 acres of quality natural areas have been purchased that will be preserved for your children and grandchildren at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Beaver Creek Greenbelt, and Camp Creek.

Water quality benefits associated with land protection, along with a series of pond, lake, and stream improvements have been another emphasis area this fiscal year. These projects will lead to improved water quality, fisheries health, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Planning and design for numerous recreation and education projects has been taking place behind the scenes, and will continue to do so in the coming years.

Any projects that have been funded fully or in part by Polk County Water & Land Legacy throughout this document are denoted by the PCWLL logo water droplet.

A sincere thank you is extended to the citizens of Polk County, our community partners, and volunteers that help us make great things happen in our parks and trails.



Young boy studies pond life at Easter Lake Park.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Polk County Conservation Board welcomed new Board member, Sara Kurovski, in July 2012.
 - Michelle McEnany ended her term as Conservation Board member in early 2013.
 - Connie Johnson was sworn into office in March 2013 as Polk County Conservation's newest Board member.
- In order to maximize flexibility and efficiency in meeting operational demands and achievements of goals that grew from the passing of the Polk County Water & Land Legacy bond referendum, one Deputy Director position and one Construction Maintenance Supervisor position were created and filled.
- The Board approved a three-year project implementation plan for Polk County Water & Land Legacy in January 2013.
- HR Green was hired to develop a master plan for Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Dr. Keith Summerville of Drake University was also contracted to complete ecological research to assist with the development of this plan.
- In partnership with the Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District, City of Des Moines, IDNR and others, the Easter Lake Watershed Management Plan was written. Partners began work in May 2013.

RECREATION ENHANCEMENT

- A Grand Opening celebration took place in July 2012 for the Jester Park Amphitheater. Numerous programs and music events took place this year.
- A one-acre wetland was constructed to help improve Two Dam Pond's water quality, along with pond dredging and the addition of three stabilization structures. Accessible recreation enhancements included a hiking trail with a bridge, fishing pier, canoe access, and parking improvements.
- Construction began in June 2013 on four rental cabins at Jester Park. These cabins will provide park users with affordable and scenic overnight accommodations that offer many modern day comforts.
- The Board approved the name "Mark C. Ackelson Trail" for the future five-mile trail around Easter Lake. Ackelson blazed the way for Iowa's trail system. He led efforts to create most of Iowa's first trails in the 1980s. During his three-decade career at the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, he helped protect over 130,000 acres of Iowa's prairies, woodlands, lakes, and rivers. Plans and contracts for this trail were approved in June 2013.
- A Grand Opening celebration took place in October 2012 at Mally's Weh-Weh-Neh-Kee Park. Improvements included a new picnic shelter, playground, restroom, parking area, and creek improvements. This park will be a future hub for Chichaqua Valley and Gay Lea Wilson Trail users.



Visitors enjoy the newly installed playground at Mally's Weh-Weh-Neh-Kee Park.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

RECREATION ENHANCEMENT (CONT'D)

- Jester Park Equestrian Center received a \$25,000 donation from Gabus Automotive Group for their Exceptional Rider program. The money is going towards participant scholarships and programming.
- Work started in the fall of 2012 to build a public access, parking lot, and wildlife viewing platform adjacent to State Highway 65. Construction continued through spring of 2013 with lumber and volunteer assistance being provided by the IDNR. The overlook is now complete and open to the public. A kiosk and interpretive signage that will provide educational information are scheduled to be in place by the spring of 2014.



The wildlife viewing platform at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt is located adjacent to Hwy 65.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- Polk County Conservation was recognized with an Iowa Tourism award at their annual conference in October 2012. Lori Foresman-Kirpes, PCC Naturalist, was recognized as an individual Friend of Tourism award winner for her efforts with park interpretation and eco-bus tour leadership.



Lori Foresman-Kirpes accepts an award at the Iowa Tourism annual conference.

- PCC sponsored the Iowa Rivers Revival Master River Stewardship program. This program is an educational program that focuses exclusively on river issues. It's designed to create local watershed leaders working in a hands-on collaborative environment with their peers to implement practices learned in the classroom. Graduates from the program must complete a watershed project as a requirement of their participation.
- Nature News, our seasonal publication, received the 2012 Outstanding Print Media Award from the Iowa Association of Naturalists and Iowa Conservation Education Coalition. Nature News is distributed to over 15,000 people. Naturalist, Heidi Anderson, is the editor of the newsletter and accepted the award at the Iowa County Conservation Board Employee Winterfest Conference in January 2013.
- PCC launched accounts with Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube and has created a monthly blog to help stay connected with the public. These social media outlets are in addition to the Facebook account the Conservation team already manages.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

LAND PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

- More than 311 acres of land at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt has been purchased to complete a NE acquisition project (the “Shaw” Property) that has been in progress since the mid-2000s. This land will eventually be restored to prairie and wetland that will benefit wildlife habitat and serve as a prime site for a variety of environmental education initiatives.
- PCC was awarded a grant from the IDNR for herpetile habitat improvement at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. The goal for this project is to protect and enhance existing habitat and develop new habitat for reptiles and amphibians at the Sand Hill Unit.
- A 28E agreement was made with IDNR to improve water quality and urban fisheries at the Fort Des Moines pond. Planning and design have been completed.
- Twenty-six acres of land was purchased at Beaver Creek Greenbelt along Highway 141. This riparian woodland area is a valuable wildlife habitat. Water quality improvements to Beaver Creek will begin with plans for bank stabilization.
- In partnership with Metro Waste Authority, 49 acres of land was purchased along Camp Creek between Runnells and Mitchellville. This riparian corridor offers quality habitat and a great place for observing wildlife. Water quality improvements will occur as the stream bank is gradually stabilized. Future plans may involve constructing hiking trails through the area and recreational water access for pedestrians.
- Over 100 acres of land has been purchased at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt running along Highway 65, northeast of the Skunk River. This former in-holding now serves as the site of the newly constructed wildlife viewing platform. The low, wet prairie area creates an opportunity for wetland restoration and quality wildlife habitat.



Spot the snake: Grant monies from IDNR will enhance habitat for amphibians and reptiles like this well-camouflaged smooth green snake.



A view of one of the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt acquisitions.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

INFRASTRUCTURE

- CXT toilets were purchased and installed at the High Trestle Trail Oasis rest area, Great Western Trailhead parking lot, and Easter Lake Park Shelter #4. These new facilities are easier to clean, fully accessible, have much less odor, and are more vandal resistant.
- Existing paved roads at Easter Lake were in need of maintenance to extend their life and provide safer travel conditions. Dust from gravel surfaced roads presented sanitary health issues, maintenance difficulties and mobility challenges for park visitors. Asphalt overlay between Shelters #3 and #4 was completed in addition to some crack sealing.



CXT toilet being installed at the High Trestle Trail Oasis rest area.

RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT

- The City of Des Moines has transferred 84.9 acres of land in Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt to PCC as previously agreed upon completion of a wetland mitigation project.
- Polk County Conservation will be contributing \$25,000 over five years to the High Trestle Trail Legacy Fund. This five year joint service agreement is for maintenance repairs on the High Trestle Trail in partnership with the cities of Ankney, Madrid, Sheldahl, Slater, Woodward, and Boone, Story, Dallas, and Polk County Conservation Boards.



A view of the High Trestle Trail, managed by many partners, including Polk County Conservation.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

REVENUE

REVENUES:	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	Bond	Golf Course	TOTALS
Property Taxes	\$3,472,545	\$918,301	\$158,658	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$4,549,504
Recreational Fees	552,881	0	0	0	0	0	0	552,881
Concessions	61,065	0	0	0	0	0	0	61,065
Environmental Protection Agency Grants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Federal Grants	79,372	0	0	347,186	0	0	0	426,558
Miscellaneous State Grants & Reimbursements	52,061	0	0	107,643	0	0	0	159,704
Land Rent	64,056	0	0	0	0	0	0	64,056
Building & Shelter Rentals	76,155	0	0	0	0	0	8,400	84,555
Equipment & Machinery Rentals	764	0	0	0	0	0	0	764
Firewood Sales	13,648	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,648
Miscellaneous Sale of Commodities	1,869	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,869
FEMA	132,983	0	0	0	0	0	0	132,983
Service Fees	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Contributions & Reimb. Other Govts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
General Administration Fees	13,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,000
Fee Based Program Revenues	58,861	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,861
Commissions	2,605	0	0	0	0	0	198,145	200,750
Motor Vehicle Fuel Refunds	7,127	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,127
Miscellaneous Contributions & Donations	3,020	0	0	0	4,735	0	0	7,755
Miscellaneous Receipts	3,394	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,394
Fixed Assets Sold	15,594	0	0	0	0	0	0	15,594
Recoveries on Losses	545	0	0	0	0	0	0	545
REAP Annual Per Capita Payment	0	0	0	0	97,628	0	0	97,628
REAP DNR Fishing & Hunting Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bond Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	1,754,354	0	1,754,354
Transfers in from Golf Course	84,082	3,551	0	85,820	0	0	0	173,453
Fund Interest	0	0	0	3	217	0	2,315	2,535
TOTAL REVENUES	\$4,695,624	\$921,852	\$158,658	\$540,651	\$102,580	\$1,754,354	\$208,860	\$8,382,579

GRANTS

The following are grants and reimbursements awarded during FY 12-13. 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.

Federal Surface Transportation Program - Gay Lea Wilson Trail	\$500,966
DNR - Thomas Mitchell Pond & Jester Park Two Dam Pond Aerators	\$11,971
REAP - Shaw Property Acquisition Grant Extension	\$258,860
DNR - Wildlife Diversity - Reptile Habitat Improvements at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt	\$1,875

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

EXPENDITURES

EXPENDITURES:	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	Bond	Golf Course	TOTALS
Conservation Infrastructure/Equipment	\$134,655	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$134,655
Environmental Education	367,596	104,614	0	0	0	0	0	472,210
Natural Resources	662,724	212,332	0	0	0	0	0	875,055
Administration	787,251	120,272	0	0	0	0	0	907,523
Community Outreach	196,773	39,259	0	0	0	0	0	236,032
Conservation Grants	663,176	0	0	0	0	0	0	663,176
Parks Advocacy	456,673	144,406	0	0	0	0	0	601,079
Construction, Maintenance, Operations	979,520	218,049	0	0	0	0	0	1,197,569
Equestrian Center	447,256	82,922	0	0	0	0	0	530,177
Insurance, Unemployment, & Workers Comp. Medical	0	0	158,658	0	0	0	0	158,658
Conservation Land Acquisition & Development	0	0	0	550,738	0	0	0	550,738
Resource Enhancement & Protection	0	0	0	0	135,401	0	0	135,401
PCWLL Bond	0	0	0	0	0	1,754,354	0	1,754,354
Golf Course Transfer to Operations & Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0	173,453	173,453
Golf Course Minor Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	17,028	17,028
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$4,695,624	\$921,852	\$158,658	\$550,738	\$135,401	\$1,754,354	\$190,481	\$8,407,108

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 Mally's Park upgrades, construction of the Equestrian Center horse trail, improvements to the Equestrian Center offices, Yellow Banks sewer improvements, and public education on the bond referendum. Monies from the Reserve funds were also used for various grant matches. Equipment and various conservation vehicles were also purchased. 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 asphalt overlay on park roads, hard surface trail repairs, wayfinding signs, equipment purchases, radio upgrades, continued work on rental cabins at Jester Park, support of a naturalist's salary for wildlife research, plus various smaller projects throughout all areas. We also supported various 28E agreements including the High Trestle Trail Legacy Fund, and sponsored the Master River Stewardship Program.

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	54,668
Carney Marsh	21,164
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt	47,157
Chichaqua Valley Trail	5,259
<i>closed from spring 2010 to October 2012</i>	
Easter Lake Park	318,964
Fort Des Moines Park	119,890
Four Mile Creek Greenbelt	298
Gay Lea Wilson Trail	31,885
Great Western Trail	31,169
High Trestle Trail	17,899
<i>near PCC gazebo area</i>	
Jester Park	414,722
<i>includes Mile Long Boat Ramp, Golf Course, Equestrian Center and Lodge</i>	
Mally's Park	12,698
Thomas Mitchell Park	109,523
Trestle to Trestle Trail	12,028
Yellow Banks Park	240,618

TOTAL PARK VISITATION* **1,437,942+**

*PCC is unable to accurately calculate total park visitation from traffic counters. The estimated visitation total of 1,437,942 people reflects only those parks equipped with counters or alternative ways for tracking visitation.

RENTAL FACILITY RESERVATIONS

Chichaqua Longhouse	68
Easter Lake Park (Shelters #1-#5)	236
Fort Des Moines Park (Shelters #1-#2)	113
Jester Park (Shelters #2-#6)	242
Jester Park Lodge	99
Mally's Park (opened fall of 2012)	4
Thomas Mitchell Park (Shelters #1-#2)	115
Yellow Banks Park (Shelters #1-#4)	64

TOTAL FACILITY RESERVATIONS **941**

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- 1,098 school programs involving 22,676 students
- 188 youth programs involving 3,971 youth
- 6 public camp programs involving 69 youth
- 63 adult programs involving 2,378 adults
- 81 family programs involving 3,391 participants
- 7 bus trips involving 328 participants

VOLUNTEER HOURS CONTRIBUTED

12,500 hours in total
Estimated value: \$219,375



Cargill Milling employees volunteering their time to beautify Fort Des Moines Park.

UNIT DIRECTORY

Polk County Conservation Administration Office

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www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Administration

Dennis Parker, Director
Richard Leopold, Deputy Director
Carol Ann Carlson, Accountant
Cindy Lentz, Administrative Supervisor
Melissa Ritter, Accounting Clerk
Ginny Malcomson, Accounting Clerk

Community Outreach

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

Environmental Education

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

Natural Resources

Loren Lown, Parks & Natural Areas Planning Admin.
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, Natural Resources Worker

Board Members

Sara Kurovski
Tom Levis
Connie Johnson
Mike Smith
Jim Cataldo

Parks Advocacy

Mark Hurm, Park Advocacy Manager
Dean Bruscher, Ranger
Brian Herrstrom, Ranger
Charlie Finch, Ranger
Chris Clingan, Assistant Ranger
James Dotzler, Assistant Ranger

Construction, Maintenance, and Operations

Wayne Johnson, Construction & Maintenance Manager
Gary Halbersma, Construction & Maintenance Supr.
Stan Manning, Special Services Technician
George Lentz, Equipment Maintenance Superintendent
Ken Young, Mechanic
Luke Harshbarger, Mechanic
Steve Haefner, Construction Technician
Barney Feezell, Construction Technician
Tim Wears, Maintenance Technician
Tyler Naeve, Maintenance Technician
Chance Patrick, Maintenance Technician

Leisure Services

Lela Mullen, Equestrian Center Manager
Bryan Fix, Barn Supervisor
Deanne Mundt, Equestrian Program Specialist
Dean Simmons, Stable Laborer I