



ANNUAL REPORT



2019



This last year has been another of growth and transition within Polk County Conservation. We have witnessed the retirement of many valuable “old oaks” employees within the organization. Our focus has been holding on to our roots of diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation, vibrant conservation education, and conservation of our expanding land base. Retirements mean the loss of valuable knowledge, yet the infusion of new team members is always exciting and makes our organization more dynamic.

With invasive species, land restoration, and climate change forever reshaping the natural world, natural resource management has never been more challenging. However, we have exciting new recreational opportunities on the horizon, such as our partnership with the Central Iowa Water Trails, the soon to be completed Lauridsen Skatepark in central Des Moines, and the expansion of beach and boating possibilities at Easter Lake Park.

We should all be proud of our mutual accomplishments. We have literally thousands of volunteers, donors, and participants that make Polk County Conservation thrive. Together, we will forge forward to protect and cherish our natural heritage, exciting programming, and recreational opportunities we share.

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

Polk County Conservation Youth Corps on a hiking trip after a rewarding season of working in our parks and trails.

Easter Lake Park Grand Opening participants learning how to cast a fishing pole.



POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION YOUTH CORPS *Inspiring a New Generation of Conservationists*

The Polk County Conservation Youth Corps program nearly doubled in 2019. Four paid crews, ages 15+, worked on over 50 projects related to natural resources in prairies, woodlands, and wetlands throughout Polk County; collectively spending 7,217 hours reconnecting with the land.

Each Youth Corps experience included conservation and recreation lessons. Teens discussed *Leave No Trace* outdoor ethics, shared daily reflections, and camped together. The teens grew in teamwork, resiliency, communication skills, and discovered an increased appreciation for public lands and a desire to help in their communities.

EXPANDING & PROTECTING Polk County's Natural Heritage

In 2019, Polk County Conservation focused heavily on the long term protection of Polk County's natural heritage by acquiring 161.4-acres. Land is acquired for reasons such as park expansion, environmental education, protection or restoration of wildlife habitat, open space, strategic location, diverse natural habitat possibilities, and water quality benefits. When looking at specific parcels of land, its location, natural features, defensible boundaries, and its restoration, education, and recreational potential are all taken into consideration. It is impossible to imagine what Polk County would be like today without a County Conservation Board.

EASTER LAKE PARK An Urban Connection to Conservation

After decades of planning, in-lake and shoreline restoration, and the addition of a new trail and pedestrian bridge, Easter Lake Park kicked off summer 2019 with a grand re-opening celebration to the public on June 23. More than 1,500 guests were in attendance and enjoyed a fun and educational afternoon at Easter Lake Park. The public rode bikes along the Mark C. Ackelson Trail surrounding the lake, rode on pontoon boats, canoed, swam, and relaxed on the beach.



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.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

The 2019 Annual Report includes "highlight" information from January 1 – December 31, 2019.

PARK AND TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

Brown's Woods Forest Preserve/ Fort Des Moines Park/Thomas Mitchell Park

Updated wayfinding signage was installed on key points of access along the trail systems within Brown's Woods Forest Preserve, Fort Des Moines, and Thomas Mitchell Parks.

Easter Lake Park

Easter Lake began filling back up in January and was completely full by March. A successful grand re-opening celebration was held on June 23, with over 1,500 people in attendance.

Park improvements included a new CXT restroom that was installed between Shelters #1 and #2 and stream stabilization that took place at the south entrance. The stream stabilization project addressed runoff from a completely urbanized 34-acre sub-watershed. Native plants and rocks checks were designed to help stabilize the channel. Additionally, a bioretention cell was constructed that helps to infiltrate stormwater and reduce pollutant loading from a nearby roadway and smaller sub-watershed.

Plans unfolded in late 2019 to relocate the Des Moines Rowing Club to Easter Lake. Proposed improvements include a new headquarters for the Rowing Club, an adaptive fishing boat/garage and accessible canoe/kayak launch, expanded beach and boardwalk with zero-entry dock, new beach concession and education/rental space, picnic shelters, and natural playscape. A Feasibility Study began in late 2019 to determine community interest and financial viability for this project.

Jester Park

Improvements to Jester Park included the addition of a new CXT restroom at Shelter #5, the construction of a wetland located near the golf course parking lot to capture runoff, and the installation of three biocells in the Jester Park Nature Center parking lot. Trail improvements and enhancements included the installation of steps to create easier access across Paw Creek and five additional interpretive signs around the Jester Park Nature Center.

Mally's Park & Trails End Wildlife Area

With the help of park stewards from Cummins Central Power, a creek access step (similar to the steps at Thomas Mitchell Park) was installed south of the Chichaqua Valley Trail bridge. Additionally, a canoe/kayak launch is anticipated to be installed within the same area in the spring of 2020.

Yellow Banks Park

Park improvements included the installation of a bridge that crosses over Oakview Pond's inlet, the construction of a boardwalk and trail improvements around Oakview Pond, and the installation of wayfinding signs along the trails throughout the park. Along with these improvements, the addition of three cabins are currently in the design phase with construction expected to begin in late summer 2020.

Chichaqua Valley Trail

A section of land was developed and improved near the east I-80/I-35 mixmaster that extended the Chichaqua Valley Trail one mile south, connecting it to Broadway Avenue and creating a new trailhead with a parking lot.

Sycamore Trails

In partnership with CITA (Central Iowa Trail Association), updated trail signage was installed on key points of access along the trail.



New trail signage along a key point of interest at Sycamore Trails.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Polk County Conservation welcomed:

- Natalie McFarlane, *Senior Accountant* (February 2019)
- Katie Stoklasa, *Administrative Supervisor* (June 2019)
- Amanda Brown, *Conservation Ecologist* (July 2019)
- Ron VanDenBroeke, *Construction Maintenance Manager* (July 2019)
- Zachary Deutmeyer, *Park Ranger* (August 2019)
- John Mackey, *Park Ranger* (August 2019)
- Maddie Moree, *Riding Instructor* (August 2019)

Polk County Water Quality Monitoring Program

Polk County Conservation's Water Quality Monitoring Program completed its fourth year of monitoring in September. 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 six-member team from the Conservation Corps of Iowa completed a 10-month service term in our family of parks and trails. Devoting their time to bond-specific projects, these individuals focused primarily on natural resource restoration and park improvements.

Youth Corps

Polk County Conservation Youth Corps consisted of four paid crews, ages 15+, with over 50 projects completed. Iowa teens spent 7,217 hours working in our parks and trails. Summer crews prepared for the Easter Lake Park Grand Re-Opening by weeding rain gardens, removing invasive plants, and mulching trails. Meanwhile, the new 8-week crew worked on several trail maintenance projects. The largest project involved removing over 100 feet of old steps at Strasser Woods to increase hiker safety. As the days turned colder, the first ever Fall Crew harvested prairie seeds at Chichaqua and installed trail signs at Fort Des Moines Park.

Jester Park Equestrian Center

In winter 2019, the Polk County Conservation Board voted to expand the equine wellness program. This expansion brought forward the need to cut costs and services in other areas which led to the discontinuation of private boarding services.

The Easter Lake Park North Shore Improvements Feasibility Study went into the planning stage. Improvements include the installation of an accessible fishing boat dock, expanded beach and boardwalk, new beach concession/rental building, picnic shelters, natural playscape, and headquarters for the Des Moines Rowing Club.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

INFRASTRUCTURE



Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Construction on the new Natural Resources Headquarters building at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt began in June. It will be located at 11201 NE 118th Avenue in Maxwell and is anticipated to be completed in spring of 2020.

Jester Park

The former golf course superintendent residence was used as a burn training exercise for the City of Granger in June. Updates at the Jester Park Lodge included the installation of new flooring, restroom upgrades, sound system and technology improvements.

Jester Park Equestrian Center

A new hay barn, complete with electrical, roof, sidewalls, and doors was completed in fall of 2019. However, tile work continues along the south side of the hay barn to allow for proper drainage. Additionally, with the help of the natural resources division, the equestrian center identified a 109-acre field that will be used to produce hay for the resident horses.



Thomas Mitchell Park

The former Park Ranger house adjacent to the pond was remodeled and turned into a 3-bedroom rental cabin. The cabin opened to the public for reservations in July.



Trestle to Trestle Trail

In January, an ice jam washed away the Trestle to Trestle Trail Bridge in Johnston. A trail reroute was established and designs for the new bridge were finalized. Construction is anticipated to begin in spring of 2020.

Yellow Banks Park

Thomas Mitchell and Yellow Banks Parks are consolidating maintenance operations to improve efficiencies. Work on the foundation and framing of the new Yellow Banks Park maintenance shop began in December and is anticipated to be completed by spring of 2020.

RECREATION ENHANCEMENT

Easter Lake Park

In June, Polk County Conservation entered into an agreement with local Ankeny outdoor store Pingora Outdoors to serve as the concessionaire located at the beach. There, you can rent boats, bikes, and other summer equipment, as well as purchase food items.

Jester Park Golf Course

In November, a joint season badge pricing system was created in partnership with the Jester Park Golf Course that allows season badge holders to also have access to the City of Des Moines' three golf courses, Blank, Grandview, and Waveland Golf Course, as well as Terrace Hill in the City of Altoona.



Nature Pass Program

In collaboration with IMPACT Community Action Center, Polk County Conservation launched a new low-income service assistance program. Nature Pass discounts 50% off programs, services, and facilities for qualified individuals and families. In year one, 34 households received discounts for education programs, camping, equestrian services, rental equipment, park shelters and cabins, and other offers.

University of Iowa Water Quality Study

In August, the University of Iowa was approved to conduct a water quality monitoring study as a part of the metropolitan water trails project. This project developed a system of real-time sensors to monitor instantaneous water quality conditions in local rivers and streams to inform users of the water trail system on the suitability of the stream for recreational contact. Funding for this initiative was made possible by the Great Outdoors Foundation as they have been selected to lead the Greater Des Moines Water Trails project by the Metropolitan Planning Organization.





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The Lauridsen Skatepark will add opportunities for outdoor recreation to an underserved population in the Downtown Des Moines area.

A Horses Helping Heroes participant bonding with his horse.



(Recreation Enhancement continued)

Lauridsen Skatepark

In November, Polk County Conservation assumed management of the Lauridsen Skatepark, located on the east side of Des Moines. The management of the skatepark aligns with Polk County Conservation’s mission to provide outdoor recreation to an underserved constituency within Polk County. The skatepark, in its proximity to the Des Moines River and the future Greater Des Moines Water Trails, will add opportunities for outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation of natural resources. Construction on the Lauridsen Skatepark began in September and is anticipated to be completed by 2020.

Jester Park Equestrian Center

Strategic planning took place at the Jester Park Equestrian Center beginning in January to address new opportunities within the organization. This comprehensive overview led to a new mission statement, “A community resource fostering education, outdoor recreation, and wellness,” which now aligns with Polk County Conservation’s mission to “Provide the citizens of Polk County with quality outdoors recreation, conservation education, and long term protection of Polk County’s natural heritage.”

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

🔹 Fall Makers Market

Polk County Conservation hosted the first Annual Fall Makers Market – Locally Grown, Raised, and Created at the Jester Park Nature Center on November 24. The market was comprised of 30 local vendors from the surrounding area who showcased their talents. More than 1,000 visitors attended the free event and were able to shop for gifts, food items, roast marshmallows, and explore Jester Park.



Guests shopping for local honey and other products at the First Annual Makers Market at the Jester Park Nature Center.

Glow Wild

Polk County Conservation, in partnership with Cumulus Media, hosted the fourth annual Glow Wild at the Jester Park Nature Center on August 24. Glow Wild featured popular classic rock band, the Georgia Satellites and local band Suede, hot air balloon rides, educational programming, horse-drawn wagon rides, canoe floats, and much more. Nearly 2,000 people were in attendance.

🔹 Easter Lake Celebration & Mark C. Ackelson Trail Grand Opening

Easter Lake Park reopened to the public on June 23 during a celebration event that drew more than 1,500 guests. Polk County Conservation used this opportunity to tell the restoration story of the lake, recruit volunteers, and showcase the new recreation opportunities in the park.

The Galleries at Jester Park Nature Center

Launched in April, the Galleries at Jester Park Nature Center offers the opportunity for local art to be displayed throughout the nature center and is made available for sale to park visitors. Since its creation, the Galleries has hosted two art shows and opening receptions titled Naturally Iowa and Inspired by Nature.



Photographer, Gary Hoard speaking at the Naturally Iowa Art Gallery Opening Reception at the Jester Park Nature Center.

HONORS & AWARDS

Excellence in Energy Efficient Design

On September 27th, the Jester Park Nature Center received a 2019 Excellence in Energy Efficient Design Award for achieving 73% kBtu savings when compared to the Commercial New Construction (CNC) program baseline.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement Award

On September 18th, Polk County Conservation received the Izaak Walton League of America Wildlife Habitat Improvement 3rd Place Award.



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Gwendolyn Mix, Easter Lake Park pollinator garden and Jester Park bouldering wall donor, with Petra Alward, bouldering wall namesake, celebrating Gwendolyn's birthday in August.

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Petra Alward climbing the newly built bouldering wall at the Jester Park Outdoor Recreation & Wellness Center.
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Jester Park Outdoor Recreation & Wellness Center

In December, Polk County Conservation took over management of the Jester Park Outdoor Recreation and Wellness Center. Official hours of operation for the bouldering wall, archery, and air rifle range went into effect, as well as the opportunity for the public to rent cross-country skis, snowshoes, canoes, etc.

Petra Alward Bouldering Room Grand Opening

The Petra Alward Bouldering Room Grand Opening took place on November 24, 2019, within the Jester Park Outdoor Recreation & Wellness Center. The grand opening event included Dutch oven cooking and fire making skills demos, archery, and s'mores roasting.

More than 500 visitors were estimated to have attended the grand opening where Petra Alward, age 5, made the inaugural climb up the wall.

NEW AT THE JESTER PARK NATURE CENTER

Environmental Education Opportunities

In 2019, the Environmental Education department expanded programs and other opportunities held at the Jester Park Nature Center. This included the addition of the following:

- Art Program Series
- Iowa Association of Naturalists State Conference Host
- Home School 'Ology' Programs
- Toddler Tales Programming
- Teaching Science through Nature Workshops
- Wellness Program Series

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

LAND PROTECTION & RESTORATION

Additional Acreage Added to Our Park System

- A 76.2-acre tract at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt was purchased in July by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for future acquisition by Polk County Conservation. Most of this parcel is currently row cropped and will be restored to a prairie-wetland complex. Savanna and woodland restoration sites along Bluff Creek frontage have also been identified.
- Two parcels totaling 29.4 acres were purchased in October and December along Muchikinock Creek north of Berwick, east of the Trails End Wildlife Area. Future restoration plans include stream remediation, wetland restoration, and savanna rehabilitation. This area is part of the 500-year floodplain of Fourmile Creek that will help address future water quality and flooding issues within the watershed.
- A 19.8-acre acquisition west of the south entrance at Easter Lake Park was purchased in May from a local resident. Improvements to this forested property include invasive species control, timber stand improvement, trail establishment, and stream remediation.
- A 36-acre land parcel in southeast Polk County, located in the Des Moines River floodplain, was transferred to Polk County Conservation by the Polk County Board of Supervisors in November. Future plans may include restoration of streams, wetlands, and plant communities.

BioBlitz within Fourmile Creek Greenway

In June, Polk County Conservation held a bioblitz where scientists and other experts focused on macro organisms such as, fungi, dragonflies, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and sedges or flowering plants that live within the Fourmile Creek Greenway. A total of 322 species were catalogued by 40 professionals and college students over the course of two days.

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Work to restore a large wetland complex within Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, west of Highway 65, was completed in August. Once this wetland complex is seeded in 2020, it will consist of 14.7 acres of wetland and 64.6 acres of restored prairie.

Easter Lake Park

A 3-acre no mow conversion area was created between Shelter #1 and Shelter #2 in September.

Through a generous donation by Gwendolyn Mix this fall, a new pollinator garden has been scheduled to be installed near the trail information hub on the north side of Easter Lake Park in spring of 2020.

Fourmile Creek Greenway

Work to execute the restoration plans along Fourmile Creek began in November. Polk County Conservation staff began clearing invasive species, restoring oxbows, and identifying locations for streambed improvements. This project will involve restoration, conversion, and enhancement of prairies, forests/woodlands, savannas, wetlands, and oxbows for the next 5 to 7 years.

Jester Park

Skull Pond, located on the Jester Park Golf Course, was drained to remove invasive species in August. The pond also underwent other restoration work and was filled by late fall.

Mally's Park & Trails End Wildlife Area

Polk County Conservation, with the help of JEO Consulting Group Inc., are working to develop the Trails End Wildlife Area Mitigation Bank. The Banking Instrument project design went into the vetting process in winter 2019. Once completed and approved by the US Army Corps of Engineers, restoration projects will take place on the three streams located within the property (Fourmile Creek, Muchikinock Creek, and an unnamed creek) beginning in the summer of 2020. Wetland restoration will follow and is anticipated to be completed in fall of 2021.

In addition to stream and wetland restoration, several recreational features will be installed on the area including several miles of soft surface trails, a fishing pond, three parking lots, and other features that are currently in the design phase.



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Park visitor hunting for insects near a pollinator garden at Easter Lake.

Polk County Conservation and Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa crews geared up for prescribed burning.



RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT

Charlie Cutler Memorial

In April, Chuck and Diane Cutler made a monetary donation to build a picnic shelter and art piece along the Great Western Trail in memory of their son Charlie Cutler. This art piece and mini shelter were installed in May.

Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa

In December, the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa went into a lease agreement with Polk County Conservation and moved their headquarters to the former Polk County Conservation Administration Building, located within Jester Park.

Petra Alward Bouldering Room

In November, Polk County Conservation opened the Petra Alward Bouldering Room located within the Jester Park Outdoor Recreation and Wellness Center. The bouldering room is open to the public year-round and was constructed as the result of a private donation by Gwendolyn Mix for her friend Petra Alward.

Public Art

Under the direction of the Polk County Conservation Public Art Committee, decorative leaf donor towers were installed along the Jester Park Nature Center streamscape. Stainless steel plaques, in honor or in memory of a special someone, are adhered to one of the leaves upon purchase.



GRANTS (awarded July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)

The following are grants and reimbursements awarded during the FY18-19. 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.

- **Iowa Department of Natural Resources:**
Easter Lake Habitat Grant \$41,085
- **Resource Enhancement and Protection –**
Conservation Education Program Grant:
Waste Reduction Awareness Program (Education) \$3,272
- **Iowa Department of Ag and Land Stewardship:**
Fourmile Creek \$100,000
- **Cummins Central Power Grant :**
Stream Stabilization at Mally’s Park \$25,000
- **North American Wetlands Conservation Act:**
Wetland Restoration at Kay’s Triangle (Chichaqua) \$105,000
- **Pheasants Forever: Crane Meadows (Chichaqua) \$140,000**
- **Mid-Iowa Retriever Club:**
Crane Meadows (Chichaqua) \$5,000
- **Iowa Department of Ag and Land Stewardship:**
Easter Lake Park Biocells \$24,514

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. PCC also completed the installation of the Bison Sculpture at the entrance of the new Nature Center with REAP funds during 2018/2019.

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.



FINANCIALS

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
 FINANCIAL STATEMENT • JULY 1, 2018 – JUNE 30, 2019 CASH BASIS

REVENUES

	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	PCWLLBond	Enterprise Fund	TOTALS
Property Taxes	\$5,135,229	\$1,321,412	\$193,305	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$6,649,946
Recreational Fees	549,535	0	0	0	0	0	0	549,535
Concessions	30,403	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,403
Miscellaneous Federal Grants	0	0	0	0	0	205,253	0	205,253
Miscellaneous State Grants & Reimbursements	0	0	0	0	7,362	959,527	0	966,889
Land Rent	26,256	0	0	0	0	0	0	26,256
Building & Shelter Rentals	103,508	0	0	0	0	0	0	103,508
Firewood Sales	12,120	0	0	0	0	0	0	12,120
Miscellaneous Sale of Commodities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEMA	202,519	0	0	0	0	0	0	202,519
Miscellaneous Contributions & Reimb. Other Govts	0	0	0	0	0	4,449,815	0	4,449,815
General Administration Fees	12,050	0	0	0	0	0	0	12,050
Fee Based Program Revenues	100,681	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,681
Commissions	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	200
Motor Vehicle Fuel Refunds	7,684	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,684
Miscellaneous Contributions & Donations	0	0	0	0	0	189,239	0	189,239
Miscellaneous Receipts	18,856	0	0	0	0	0	0	18,856
Fixed Assets Sold	10,693	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,693
Recoveries on Losses	1,531	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,531
REAP Annual Per Capita Payment	0	0	0	0	90,951	0	0	90,951
Bond Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	9,559,700	0	9,559,700
Golf Course Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	0	303,381	303,381
Project Notes Proceeds	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,775,000	3,775,000
Jester Park Cabin Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	0	110,835	110,835
Miscellaneous Revenues	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,728	10,728
Fund Interest	0	0	0	0	1,053	1,032	5,642	7,727
TOTAL REVENUES	\$6,211,266	\$1,321,412	\$193,305	\$—	\$99,336	\$15,364,566	\$4,205,586	\$27,395,500

EXPENDITURES

	General Basic	General Supp.	Insurance	Reserve	REAP	PCWLLBond	Enterprise Fund	TOTALS
Conservation Infrastructure/Equip.	\$258,181	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$—	\$258,181
Environmental Education	566,776	148,067	0	0	0	0	0	714,843
Natural Resources	824,424	290,611	0	0	0	0	0	1,115,035
Administration	1,290,096	224,890	0	0	0	0	0	1,514,985
Community Outreach	185,390	35,060	0	0	0	0	0	220,451
Conservation Grants	94,294	0	0	0	0	0	0	94,294
Parks Advocacy	1,057,194	258,771	0	0	0	0	0	1,315,965
Construction, Maintenance, Operations	1,147,947	244,906	0	0	0	0	0	1,392,853
Equestrian Center	786,964	119,107	0	0	0	0	0	906,071
Insurance, Unemployment, & Workers Comp. Medical	0	0	193,305	0	0	0	0	193,305
Resource Enhancement & Protection	0	0	0	0	240,129	0	0	240,129
PCWLL Bond Expenditures	0	0	0	0	0	15,364,566	0	15,364,566
Enterprise Transfer to Operations & Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0	98,638	98,638
Golf Course Minor Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	900,642	900,642
Golf Course Project Note Repayment	0	0	0	0	0	0	275,000	275,000
Jester Park Cabins Minor Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	42,602	42,602
Jester Park Lodge Minor Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	31,145	31,145
Miscellaneous Enterprise Minor Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,862	10,862
Gain in Fund Balances	0	0	0	0	(140,763)	0	2,846,698	2,705,935
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$6,211,266	\$1,321,412	\$193,305	\$—	\$99,366	\$15,364,566	\$4,205,586	\$27,395,500

2019 FACTS AND FIGURES



PARK VISITATION (where recorded)

Brown's Woods	115,625
Carney Marsh	34,006
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt	114,410
Chichaqua Valley Trail	40,159
Easter Lake Park	1,124,881
<i>(includes Mark C. Ackelson Trail)</i>	
Fort Des Moines Park	338,504
Fourmile Creek Greenway	16,054
Gay Lea Wilson Trail	19,130
Great Western Trail	39,917
High Trestle Trail	36,641
<i>(near PCC gazebo area)</i>	
Jester Park	804,729
<i>(includes Mile Long Boat Ramp, Golf Course, Equestrian Center, Nature Center, and Lodge)</i>	
Jester Park Nature Center	56,565
Mally's Park and Trails End Wildlife Area	29,412
Thomas Mitchell Park	211,378
Trestle to Trestle Trail	16,150
Yellow Banks Park	285,559

Total Park Visitation 3,283,120 +

**The estimated total park visitation of 3,283,120+ people reflects only those parks equipped with counters or alternative ways for tracking visitation. Not all areas are conducive to tracking devices.*

RENTAL FACILITY RESERVATIONS

Chichaqua Longhouse	96
Easter Lake Park Shelters	236
Fort Des Moines Park Shelters	173
Jester Park Nature Center/ Outdoor Recreation & Wellness Center	34
Jester Park Shelters <i>(including amphitheater)</i>	258
Jester Park Lodge	57
Mally's Park Shelter	15
Thomas Mitchell Park Shelters	105
Yellow Banks Park Shelters	63
Jester Park Cabins	841
Thomas Mitchell Park Cabin	27
<i>(Reservations began July 2019)</i>	

TOTAL Facility Reservations 1,710

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- 1,129 school programs involving 18,177 students
- 287 youth programs involving 4,732 youth
- 14 public camp programs involving 169 youth
- 98 adult programs involving 2,645 adults
- 149 family programs involving 6,879 participants
- 5 bus trips involving 233 participants

The Environmental Education staff connected with various audiences for a total of 49,367 hours.

VOLUNTEER HOURS CONTRIBUTED

- 2,171+ Volunteers completed 19,300+ hours of service
- Volunteer hours are valued at \$23.41/hour, totaling \$445,328 worth of work accomplished in 2019
- A total of 106 public, private, and co-hosted volunteer-based events took place throughout Polk County Conservation's parks and trails



2019 National Trails Day participants posing for a photo at Jester Park.

BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

ADMINISTRATION

Richard Leopold, *Director*
Douglas Romig, *Deputy Director*
Natalie McFarlane, *Senior Accountant*
Katie Stoklasa, *Administrative Supervisor*
Stacey Lundquist,
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*
Joe Boyles, *Naturalist*
Lori Foresman-Kirpes, *Naturalist*
Lewis Major, *Naturalist*
Janna Coulter, *Youth Corps Coordinator*

NATURAL RESOURCES

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

BOARD MEMBERS

Lance Northway, *Board Chair*
Jill Altringer, *Vice-Chair*
Jim Cataldo, *Secretary*
Ryan Crane
Tom Levis (*served through 03/20*)
Diana Baratta (*served through 12/19*)

PARKS DIVISION

Erich Braun, *Parks Superintendent*
Dean Bruscher, *Conservation Park Ranger*
Zach Deutmeyer, *Conservation Park Ranger*
James Dotzler, *Conservation Park Ranger*
Charlie Finch, *Conservation Park Ranger*
David Weidt, *Conservation Park Ranger*
Brad Janssen, *Maintenance Park Ranger*
John Mackey, *Maintenance Park Ranger*
Eric Baker, *Maintenance Technician*
Tyler Naeve, *Maintenance Technician*
Chance Patrick, *Maintenance Technician*

CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE, AND OPERATIONS

Ron VanDenBroeke,
Construction Maintenance Manager
Adam Fendrick, *Park Planner*
Gary Halbersma,
Construction Maintenance Supervisor
Barney Feezell, *Construction Technician*
Steve Haefner, *Construction Technician*
Brent Hansen, *Construction Technician*
Ken Young, *Mechanic Supervisor*
William Deaton, *Mechanic*
Luke Harshbarger, *Mechanic*

JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER

Claudia Starr, *Equestrian Center Manager*
Liz Beatty, *Barn Supervisor*
Sierra Carmichael, *Riding Instructor*
Curtis Kentner, *Operations Coordinator*
Molly Mellinger, *Program Coordinator*
Molly Ann Moore, *Equestrian Center Clerk*
Madeline Moree, *Riding Instructor*

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.



POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION

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