



PRAIRIE HORIZONS

STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION | NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

November 2024 - January 2025



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IN THIS ISSUE

The Latest	2
Recent Projects	3
Our Future, Our Legacy	4
New County Park	6
Cultivating Conservation	8
Hunting Blind & Archery	10
Programs & Events	12

Photo by Aaron Eckley

THE LATEST

Timely and brief updates on ongoing projects



Story County Conservation staff Jessica Paulin, Marianne Harrelson, Hunter Simmons, Ryan Wiemold and son Asher Wiemold had a blast participating in the 2024 Lincoln Highway Days Parade on August 24 in Nevada.

New corporate *Partners* member!

We would like to welcome our newest corporate *Partners* member, Hach! We appreciate their support of Story County's natural areas and want to express our gratitude.



Know a local business who may be interested in supporting local conservation efforts? Reach out and encourage them to become a corporate *Partners* member! It's as easy as submitting the form on page 15 of this issue, or donating online at www.mycountyparks.com.



Employees from Ames-based software company, Vertex, stand proudly after completing a trails project at McFarland Park as part of the United Way's Day of Caring on September 13. The volunteers hauled gravel to fill a newly-built set of trail stairs.

Partners Update

As of September 18, Partners has raised \$12,696.00 towards its FY25 goal of \$45,000 to fund restoration of up to five oxbows at Wicks Wildlife Area, north of Story City. This is a crucial step towards advancing Story County Conservation's greenway mission to preserve essential habitat along the South Skunk River, and we are grateful for your continued support.

If you have not returned your renewal envelope, please do so soon! Encourage friends and neighbors to support conservation in Story County, using Page 13 of this issue. Together we can accomplish great things!

RECENT PROJECTS

Story County Conservation (SCC) is not new to leveraging money. Since 2016, SCC has leveraged \$8 million tax dollars into \$20 million worth of improvement projects. This includes grants, fundraising, donations, and more. In no particular order, here are some of the most notable projects over the last several years. *Click each number for more information.*

McFarland Lake Renovation – This spring, McFarland Lake refilled after being drained for construction in 2022. We removed 60,000 cu yds of sediment, restoring its depth to 26 feet. The restoration improved water quality and accessibility, adding shoreline stabilization, sediment retention ponds, angling access, and a zero-grade paddling launch (see below).



2 Sensitive Areas Inventory - This countywide initiative is focused on enhancing all natural areas in Story County, including private lands. By inventorying these lands, we can empower landowners to protect and enhance natural areas, improving Story County's ecosystems as a whole.

Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Paving – Since 2019, over 20 miles of this multi-use trail have been paved, connecting five communities in southern Story County. This trail is part of two national trails, the Great American Rail-Trail and American Discovery Trail, and connects to the High Trestle Trail and Central Iowa Trails Network.



Soper's Mill Water Trail Access Improvements

– This water trail Access saw significant improvements last fall, enhancing safety and accessibility for South Skunk River paddlers. Concrete ramps above and below the rock riffles offer better access, while a crushed limestone parking lot accommodates truck/trailer parking. New signage highlights the site's rich history.

5

Kayak Launches – Four new launches were installed this summer at some of Story County's best paddling destinations: Dakins Lake, West Peterson Park, and an ADA launch at Hickory Grove Park (on north boat ramp).

Prairie Valley Preserve & Deppe Family Conservation Area Acquisition and Development

- Both properties add a combined 194 acres of beautiful landscape to Story County Conservation. *Read about Prairie Valley Preserve on Page 6.*



Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor

– This unique, 37-acre park opened in 2019 in ISU's Research Park. As collaborative effort between county, city, university and state partners, it showcases sustainable technologies, environmental education, water quality awareness, trail connectivity and several permanent sculptures.

OUR FUTURE, OUR LEGACY

STORY COUNTY WATER & LAND LEGACY BOND

Voters will head to the polls in several short weeks, each to express their own voice. In Story County, voters will have the opportunity to shape the future much closer to home: a chance to protect long-term health of water quality and natural resources, and improve parks and trails in Story County.

If approved, the Story County Water and Land Legacy Bond would provide \$25 million in dedicated funding for conservation and recreational projects countywide. (Focus areas include enhancing water quality and habitat, enhancing river and stream buffers and improving parks and trails—all of which would enhance the quality of life for Story County residents.)

Story County Conservation (SCC) has a good track record for responsible handling of money. SCC will leverage the bond by utilizing contributions from private donors, grant funding and community partnerships to enhance the public's investment – maximizing impact of the bond. SCC is skilled at securing grant funding, although many grants require local matching funds. More could be done, and done sooner, if a dedicated and secure funding source was available. In fact, locally raised funds can often leverage several

dollars from granting agencies for every local dollar – meaning \$25 million could become a significant amount more.

Distribution of the Story County Water and Land Legacy Bond spending is as follows: Parks 36%, Water and Habitat 32%, Trails & Outdoor Recreation 32%. Read more about some of the proposed projects below.

“This bond would increase cost to Story County homeowners (median household) by \$32 annually in property taxes.”

PRESERVATION

By investing in land and water preservation, SCC plans to protect clean water sources, as well as mitigate flooding damage and maintain valuable wildlife habitat. Streambanks would be stabilized to reduce erosion.

Improving Skunk River oxbows will increase flood water retention at places like Wicks Wildlife Area, reducing pressure on downriver communities. This is vital for reducing risk of catastrophic flooding as recently seen in other parts of Iowa. River buffers would provide wildlife habitat while also improving water quality.

Other plans include water quality at Hickory Grove Park beach through a tiered overlook and water runoff treatment area.

RECREATION

Many factors play into a community's quality of life, one of them being recreational opportunities. In today's digital age it is more important than ever to provide parks, natural areas and places where children can play and be physically active.

By enhancing existing spaces, like improvements to multiple Skunk River water accesses, and building additional ones, like a rental cabin at Dakins Lake, we can ensure that our children and grandchildren will have numerous places to play close to home. Additionally, these attractions will bring visitors to Story County.

Creating connections between the Ames trail system and McFarland Park, and a bike trail from Ames to Slater as an alternate to the R38 bike lanes, will enhance cyclists' ability to travel more freely – and safely. Bond projects also value accessibility, and would provide ADA compliant pathways, beach access and fishing pier at Hickory Grove Park.

Protecting natural areas, too, can play a very important role in preserving quality of life in Story County. Hunters will enjoy increased wildlife habitat for species like pheasants and wild turkeys along the Skunk River Greenbelt.

Other areas of focus include things we've all heard in conversation in recent years, like a dedicated parking lot, trailhead and restrooms at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor. Amenities at the new Deppe Family Conservation Area including trail network, educational signage, and picnic shelter are included in the bond project list, as well as completion of Heart of Iowa Nature Trail paving from Collins into Marshall County.

EDUCATION

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to save Story County's open space, clean water and wildlife so future generations can enjoy them the same way we do. Construction of an environmental education center at McFarland Park will provide a full-time facility for programs, camps and classrooms year-round, along with public gathering space.

By inviting all Story County residents to participate



in environmental education programs, we hope to share this love of the outdoor world with even more people, ensuring environmental stewardship lasts long into the future in our community.

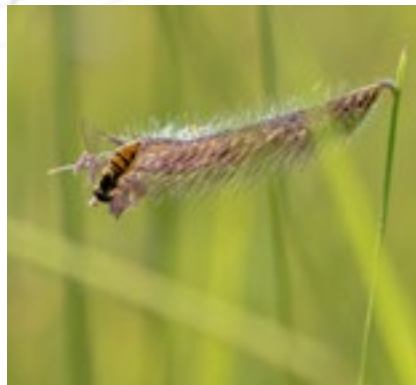
Raising necessary revenue to proceed with important projects is difficult, depending on only the annual budgeting process. The \$25 million twenty-year obligation bond, if approved, would allow the county to move forward in a timely manner on a variety of projects to improve and protect water quality in lakes and streams, provide nature education for children and adults, protect wildlife habitat, and offer outdoor recreation opportunities to everyone in Story County.

Story County residents can choose to invest in the future quality of life for Story County's citizens. The bond proposal will appear on the back of the ballot.

For more information or a complete list of bond projects, scan QR code or visit www.bit.ly/waterandland



COEXISTING *with* NATURE



Photos by Carter Ross: Hairy grama (*Bouteloua hirsuta*), leopard frog and monarch butterfly on whorled milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*).

PRAIRIE VALLEY PRESERVE: HOME FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

One function of conservation is “to provide homes for wildlife.” Story County Conservation’s (SCC) newest park—74 acres of refuge, including prairie and wetland habitat along Ioway Creek, is doing just that. Through a new and unique partnership, homes for people are also being provided at the same area.

Prairie Valley Preserve, west of Gilbert, is composed of 50 acres of prairie, including scattered remnant prairie and a 20-acre constructed wetland. A one-mile mowed trail and other amenities will be completed soon.

This story begins with a developer seeing ecological value in a piece of land and working with local partners to preserve it – something that is not often the story these days.

After purchasing the land for development, Kurt Friedrich with Friedrich Iowa Realty learned of the property’s high-quality prairie. Together, Friedrich and SCC developed a plan to protect these ecological resources while still providing a place for homes. Developers added a seat at the

table for SCC and other Story County experts while drawing plans to create sewer systems and other infrastructure, ensuring protection of the surrounding fragile prairie ecosystem. Safeguards are in place through the developer and homeowner’s association for long term protections over these natural resources.

The wetland is the first example in Story County of a drainage district pumped wetland. SCC saw opportunity to use this land to impact water quality through the creation of a wetland. Wetlands serve as both a sponge and filter, providing immense water storage during times of heavy rain and reducing flood risk and severity downstream. In this case, protecting Ames. It will also provide rich habitat for wildlife, water fowl, and plants.

Working with the City of Ames, and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, who funded the wetland construction, this wetland will treat 2,000 acres of drainage before it enters Ioway Creek. Water from

the drainage district will be pumped into the wetland, allowing for nutrient removal from upstream agricultural and residential land.

Other partners include Ducks Unlimited, and Story County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Historically, this land was either grazed or row cropped, and only scattered hillsides protected patches of prairie remnants from being plowed. Today, less than 0.1% of Iowa prairie remains, so it is especially important to prioritize protection of these relics. We do our best to reconstruct prairies, but they’re very complex ecosystems. Many species of seeds aren’t readily available on the market. For example, this remnant contains Chapman’s blue grass (*Poa chapmaniana*). It is listed as a threatened species in Iowa, only known to occur on three sites in the state.

SCC staff conducted a prescribed burn in April, bringing fire to refresh this prairie for likely the first time since pre-European settlement. The fire stimulated great numbers of prairie larkspur (*Delphinium carolinianum*), prairie blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium campestre*), Fringed puccoon (*Lithospermum incisum*), and hairy grama (*Bouteloua hirsuta*).

The park’s remnant prairie is named Landers Prairie, after Dr. R. Q. “Jake” Landers (1932-2024). Landers taught at ISU for 17 years (1962-1979) and was an early leader in identification of prairie remnants, reconstruction methods, and

“Today, less than 0.1% of remnant Iowa prairie remains, so it is especially important to prioritize protection of these relics.”

teaching management practices.

It is a win-win-win: Wildlife that have called this land home will remain and with enhanced habitat, water quality will be improved while protecting Ames downstream, and residents will have this amenity right in their backyards. Homeowners may look forward to the spectacular views of the vast and diverse wetland, home to many bird species. This land will add valuable habitat to the Ioway Creek corridor.

This park is a product of partnerships. SCC has a history of finding creative ways to meet important goals for the community. The Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor illustrates the synergy between conservation and economic development. Prairie Valley Preserve uses similar concepts.

It doesn’t have to be nature or neighborhoods—both can exist symbiotically. By educating Iowans about these natural spaces and building appreciation for them, and through partnerships with property owners of all kinds, it is our hopes that we can continue to connect people with nature and improve natural resources – making Story County a great place to live, work, and recreate.

Wetland construction is nearing completion. Trail construction, a picnic area, and other park amenities are planned to be complete by spring of 2025. Once these items are complete, the park will officially open to the public!

[Click here to learn more about Prairie Valley Preserve.](#)

Dr. Tom Rosburg leads a small tour at Prairie Valley Preserve for conservation employees during a recent district meeting. Rosburg, a local botany expert, has been an integral part of Story County Conservation’s prairie restoration efforts for years, including at this park.





Cultivating CONSERVATION

By Brandon Clough, Natural Resource Specialist

In Iowa, conservation of natural resources and agriculture can sometimes be seen as opposites.

However, in an agriculturally-dominated region, we need to find ways to better partner with neighbors to assist in achieving mutual goals – specifically, a healthy rural Story County for current and future generations – making it a great place to live, work, and recreate. The following are a few examples of our expanded efforts in partnering with local producers:

SCC partnered with Mark Tjernagel of Roland this spring to **graze cattle at Carroll Prairie** (north of Nevada) from April to June. This was a first for Story County Conservation (SCC).



Cattle graze at Carroll Prairie earlier this spring.

The cattle grazed on undesired cool-season grasses (smooth brome and reed canary grass), setting them back. These grasses have an advantage over native species because they green up earlier in spring than most native

plants, crowding them out. Grazing leveled the playing field, allowing space for native plants and diversifying the habitat.

The grazed landscape will include more flowering plants than before, attracting insects which feed wildlife - including pheasants! Grazing is also less destructive than other management methods - the cattle left ungrazed patches of refuge for birds to nest. Following the grazing period, the property's remnant prairie looks the best it has in years!

Restoring prairie at the newly-acquired Deppe Family Conservation Area has taken a different approach. Ninety-five acres at this property were **planted with soybeans** this summer through partnership with Chance Flynn of Fernald. This grassland was dominated with smooth brome. The goal of this project was to terminate it so a diverse native prairie can be planted to provide better habitat for wildlife. Flynn used a no-till planting practice, drilling soybeans directly into the green grass and later terminating it with herbicide. This fall, Flynn will plant a cover crop. These conservation-minded practices, in addition to the existing terraces installed by the Deppe family decades ago, will limit our impact to the property's soil health and water quality of the adjacent river, while the restoration process continues.

Row cropping also took place at Hickory Grove Park this year, through partnership with the Nevada FFA Chapter. During the lake renovation in 2019, sediments removed from the lake were deposited to a spoil site for future prairie establishment. The sediment contained seeds of invasive and undesired plants, and grew into a blanket of Canada thistle and reed canary grass. Planting prairie into this seed bank was futile, and the best option was to create a blank canvas to plant prairie into by terminating all vegetation.



Photo by Kevin Cooper

With a late-September harvest, Nevada FFA wraps up their project of raising 11 acres of soybeans at Hickory Grove Park.



Owen Wilson (Nevada FFA) hauls soybean seed towards the planter at Hickory Grove Park.

SCC enlisted the help of Nevada FFA, creating a valuable partnership for both students and SCC's prairie goals. FFA advisor Kevin Cooper and students spent many hours removing debris from the uneven spoil to ensure it wouldn't be a problem for farm equipment. Steve, Jim, and Owen Wilson then prepared the soil and planted 11 acres of soybeans, donated by Kolln Seed Sales – Pioneer Seed. This low-stakes learning experience provided FFA members a lesson in both agriculture and conservation.

Nevada FFA plans to farm the site again next year. SCC will then follow with a new prairie seeding the following dormant season. A cover crop will be planted this fall.

For several years, SCC has partnered with Deb Finch of Collins to **graze goats** in various SCC parks. The lease agreement is mutually beneficial: goats eat for free, while SCC gets cheap labor. They defoliate undesired brush, consuming thorns and even poison ivy. This provides sunlight to the understory below, giving way to native grasses and forbs. Goat grazing efforts have focused on savanna and woodland restoration efforts at Christiansen Forest Preserve, Hickory Grove Park, Robison Wildlife Acres and more over the years.

SCC has partnered with multiple tenants to **hay in SCC parks**. One example was at Christiansen Forest Preserve near Huxley. As part of a prairie reconstruction practice, SCC needed to terminate the current grasses. Rather than mowing the area, we enlisted help from a tenant to hay it. This provided SCC staff with vegetation that was at a more desirable height and growth stage for spraying.

All of these practices have saved SCC time and resources while supporting local producers and our rural economy. They exemplify how conservation and agricultural professionals can partner to improve wildlife habitat, plant diversity, and water quality while yielding positive agricultural outcomes.

PROJECTS, CONT.



Hickory Grove Lake Renovation - A two-year renovation included draining the 100-acre lake, shoreline deepening and armoring, improvements to the dam and lake outlet structure, and eliminated invasive carp. Along with water quality improvements, new fish habitat structures and boat ramps were constructed.

Story County Trails Master Plan - This Master Plan is in its final phase, after public input meetings and online surveys from Story County citizens this spring. The Master Plan prioritizes trail initiatives and future connections with cost opinions and potential funding sources.

Peterson Park Shelters - Three picnic shelters and amenities with ADA access were recently constructed at West Peterson Park to provide additional shade and gathering space. One large shelter now overlooks the lake and two smaller ones overlook the beach area.



Nichoel Church practices her shot during a weekly Field to Fork session. This Iowa DNR program, co-hosted by SCC, introduces new people to the sport of bowhunting through mentorship and hands-on learning.

ARCHERY RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Hickory Grove Park's existing archery range has received significant improvements. Upgrades include the installation of permanent targets at distances of 10, 20, 30 and 40 yards, ensuring that archers can practice and hone their skills effectively, without having to bring a target from home.

A permanent brick shooting line now accommodates up to eight shooters simultaneously. Bow rests have been added, so bows don't have to rest on the ground while archers retrieve arrows. A porta-potty has also been placed on-site for convenience.

Broadheads and firearms are not permitted. Crossbows are allowed. The archery range is open from sunrise to half hour after sunset.

Archery range is located on the south side of Hickory Grove Lake, across from Primitive Campground.

EDGE OF FIELD UPDATE:

WOOD CHIPS & WATER

We're already in year four the Edge of Field program! This program strives to improve water quality by helping landowners to install edge of field nutrient reduction practices, like saturated buffers and bioreactors. These practices decrease nitrates flowing from farm fields into waterways.

Year 1 practices are complete and now treat 1,000 acres of drainage, while installation of Year 2 practices will start this fall. We are in the design stage for Year 3 applicants and currently in the survey stage for Year 4 sites. The first four years of this program will treat 78 outlets, for an estimated 3,000 acres of run off.

Both saturated buffers and bioreactors reduce up to 95% of nitrates, do not impact crops and have a long lifespan. This program is 100% funded through a partnership with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, City of Ames, Story County, and Natural Resource Conservation Service.



Above, a bioreactor is being constructed at field's edge. A bioreactor, or a covered pit filled with wood chips, removes nitrates from water as it leaves the field. Excess water flows through the bioreactor before entering a nearby stream.

Reservable Hunting Blind at Sleepy Hollow

- ☑ Free hunting opportunity for youth (15 & under) mentored hunts & disabled hunts
- ☑ Archery deer hunting only (including crossbow)
- ☑ Slots available in specific windows from Sept. to Jan.
- ☑ Sleepy Hollow Access located north of Ames

More info/Make reservation:
Scan QR code or visit
www.bit.ly/huntsleepy



PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

NOV., DEC., JAN.

Wild Tots: Rockin' Reptiles

Saturday, Nov. 2, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

McFarland Park

Calling reptile lovers! We'll learn about reptiles and where they go in winter. It's too cold to find them outside, but we'll meet scaly friends inside. Program includes hike, games, story, and craft. Intended for tots 18 months to not yet in school. Register online by Oct. 28.

Thank-Full Moon Feast

Friday, Nov. 15, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

McFarland Park

There is much to be thankful for, especially delicious food! Join us for a fireside evening and learn how to cook outdoors. We'll create a delicious meal of stew, cheesy bread, and dessert (vegetarian options available). Come with a hungry tummy! Register online by Nov. 13.

Big Year for Hummingbird Nests

Sunday, Nov. 17, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Teresa Testroet, local photographer & frequent park-goer, spent the nesting season closely observing hummingbirds of McFarland Park. View photos and hear about her "obsession" as she discovered nests and tracked the young's growth. Learn how these birds link to conservation issues and solutions through native plants. Register online by Nov. 14.

Nature Puzzle Tuesdays

1st and 3rd Tuesdays, starting in December

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Come and go as you please to enjoy nature jigsaw puzzles in front of the birdwatching window at the Conservation Center, cozied up with a warm drink (coffee and hot chocolate provided). Available on first and third Tuesdays, December thru February. No registration needed.

Winter Craft and Cocoa

Sunday, Dec. 8, 10:00 a.m. - Noon

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Join us for a cozy morning of winter nature crafting and warm cocoa! Numerous winter nature-themed crafts available and plenty of ideas to inspire you as well. Craft supplies for all ages will be provided. Register online by Dec. 5.

Luminary Walk

Friday, Dec. 13, 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

McFarland Park

Let luminaries light your way on a special walk to welcome

winter! Enjoy a self-guided walk on a paved, one-mile trail lined with luminaries. Register online by Dec. 9.

Pyrography Creations

Saturday, Dec. 14 10:00 a.m. – Noon OR 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Turn up the heat and learn the art of wood burning! Naturalist Clair will teach the basics. Participants will design a wood cookie ornament to take home. Kids must be 13 or older to attend. Register online by Dec. 8.

Noon Year's Eve

Tuesday, Dec. 31, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

McFarland Park

Celebrate the final day of 2024 and the start to a new year with an adventure! Program includes nature activities for the whole family, and countdown to noon—with a birdseed toss and juice toast! Celebration will end with hot cocoa and s'mores around a fire. Register online by Dec. 29.

Beat the Blues! Winter Activity Marathon

January 1 – March 1 (Independent Event)

Challenge yourself to complete a full marathon between Jan. 1 and Mar. 1. Walk, run, ski, or bike 26 mi. outdoors at your own pace. Or play outside for 30 min. to equal one mile. Record your mileage on the Mileage Log, available for pick up at McFarland Park, or download at www.storycountyconservation.org. Turn in your completed log to win a discount on SCC online registrations, camping or rentals.

Wild Tots: Woodland Wonders

Saturday, Jan. 4, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Bundle up your little one for a woodland adventure! There is lots to discover in the woods, even in winter. We'll explore and learn what animals are out now. Program includes story, craft, short hike and hands-on activities. Intended for tot 18 months to not yet in school. Register online by Dec. 30.

Winter Survival

Saturday, Jan. 4, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Celebrate winter and the new year with us! It may be chilly, but there's no need to be cooped up. Get out and discover how



Location: McFarland Park, Conservation Center
Doors open at 10:00 a.m. for coffee/tea & chatting.

Exploring Glacier National Park in Comfort

Thursday, Nov. 7, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Discover how to travel by train to Glacier National Park. Explore the park's natural and cultural wonders across elevations and ecosystems on foot and with mobility supports. This travelogue is based at East Glacier Lodge and follows SCC board member Nancy Franz as she hikes with Jessie (her 89-year-old mother), as she rolls with her walker around the park.

amazing nature is during winter. We'll spend the time building shelters and campfires. Once we have a fire, we'll warm up and enjoy s'mores and hot cocoa! Register online by Dec. 31.

Pine Needle Weaving

Saturday, Jan. 11, 9:00-Noon OR 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Learn how to turn simple pine needles into a tiny basket using this age-old art. This is a hands-on craft that can be recreated again at home once you know how. Register online by Dec. 5. *Please notice two time slots are available.

Gardening for Beginner Series

Part 1: Winter Prep

Saturday, Jan. 25, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Co-Hosted by Mustard Seed Farms

Interested in gardening, but don't know where to start? Join Naturalist Amber and guests from Mustard Seed Farm, for a four-part series, split between seasons, to learn all you need starting out! Register for one session or all four. Gardeners of all skill levels welcomed.

Part 1 is all about gathering the information and tools you need to get started in the winter, designing and preparing your garden, soil health, and indoor seed preparation. Register online by Jan. 16.

Environmental Literature Club

Tuesday, Jan. 28 & Tuesday, Feb. 25, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Ames Public Library, Danfoss Room / Zoom

Explore nature cozied up with a good book at Environmental

Bioreactors and Saturated Buffers

Thursday, Dec. 5, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Join Watershed Coordinator Sara Carmichael to learn how SCC is making a difference on private lands. The two conservation practices – saturated buffers and bioreactors – have become part of the county's efforts to reduce nitrates entering our waterways. These practices are part of a "batch and build" program that is in its 4th year and has worked because of the strong partnerships the county has with the City of Ames, Iowa DNR, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

O.W.L.S – Travels on Seven Continents

Thursday, Jan. 2, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Phil Larson, author, photographer and lifelong resident of Boone will share his photos and stories, providing a narrative from his many travels around the world (over 100 countries!). Join us to relive his adventures another time.

Literature Club! Join a discussion with Naturalist Bekah and other nature lovers. Each session will discuss a different book focused on the human relationship with the environment: *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson (Jan) and *Silent Earth* by Dave Goulson (Feb). Free, but participants are responsible for their own books. Register online by Jan. 13. Registration covers BOTH months' programs.

One 4 Water – A paddling adventure with Hank Kohler

Thursday, Jan. 23, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Ames Public Library

Hosted by Outdoor Alliance of Story County

Local resident, Hank Kohler, will guide us on his paddle down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico and the book he wrote about his trip, "One 4 Water." This was not Hank's first long paddle where he went north from Minnesota to Hudson Bay.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunity

We're planning a T.E.A.M. (Trails Enhancement and Maintenance) work day in early November at Christiansen Forest Preserve. A date has not yet been set. **Watch for updates here.**

FOR REGISTRATION, VISIT:

Scan QR code or visit

www.storycountyconservation.org





Splash INTO LEARNING

New Loanable Watershed Discovery Backpack!

Curious about the fascinating world of watersheds and water testing? Thanks to Watershed Coordinator Sara Carmichael, engaging exploration just got easier! Sara has developed innovative loaner backpacks filled with hands-on activities, designed to spark curiosity and deepen understanding of local water systems. Backpacks will be available for checkout at McFarland Park for up to two weeks at a time.

This initiative invites parents, educators, and curious individuals to dive into the science of water quality testing and watersheds. Each backpack contains a variety of educational activities. Here's a sneak peek at what you'll find inside:

- Crumpled Watershed Model: Create a 3D representation of a watershed and learn how water flows across different landscapes.
- Water Cycle in a Bag: Experience the water cycle firsthand with this activity that illustrates evaporation, condensation, and precipitation.
- Stormwater Walk: Explore your local area while identifying potential stormwater issues and understanding their impact on ecosystems.
- Water Quality Chemical Monitoring: Get hands-



on experience testing water samples to learn about pH, nitrates and other essential indicators of water health.

- And more!

Backpacks available for check out at McFarland Park during business hours, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Contact the Conservation Center at 515.232.2516 with questions.

BOARD & STAFF

The Story County Conservation Board typically meets the second Monday of each month at the Story County Conservation Center at McFarland Park (56461 180th St.). Meetings are open to the public.

Conservation Board

Dr. Jim Pease, Chair
 Craig Meyers, Vice Chair
 Christine Laumer, Secretary
 Dr. Nancy Franz, Member
 Erica Place, Member
 Linda Murken, Ex-Officio Member

Conservation Center Staff, Ames

Michael Cox, Director
 Ryan Wiemold, Parks Superintendent
 Pat Shehan, Special Projects Ranger
 Marianne Harrelson, Financial Data Mgr.
 Jess Paulin, Administrative Assistant
 Jerry Keys, Environmental Education Coord.
 Rebekah Beall, Naturalist
 Bobbi Donovan, Naturalist
 Amber Piatt, Naturalist
 Clair Pfantz, Naturalist
 Madi Nolte, Community Engagement Coord.

McFarland Park Shop, Ames

Russ DeWall, Operations Supervisor
 Logan Heissel, Park Ranger
 Dillon Schmidt, Conservation Technician II
 Kallie Judson, Conservation Technician I
 Derek Seward, Trails/Natural Resources Tech.

Hickory Grove Park Shop, Colo

Jake Smith, Operations Supervisor
 Olivia VanderHart, Park Ranger
 Hunter Simmons, Conservation Technician II
 Maxwell McCarty, Conservation Technician I
 Brandon Clough, Natural Resources Specialist

IRVM Office & Shop, Nevada

Ty Hamiel, Vegetation Mgmt. Biologist

Administration Bldg., Nevada

Sara Carmichael, Watershed Coordinator

HELP RESTORE OXBOWS AT WICKS WILDLIFE AREA

Help us reach our pledge of \$45,000

Your Story County Conservation *Partners* membership will help restore oxbows at the Wicks Wildlife Area along the South Skunk River, north of Story City. You will receive a nature-themed magnet and a 10% discount on all programs, facility rentals, and merchandise. The Red fox membership level and above will be recognized in the Conservation Center for their support.

Red-tailed Hawk - \$1,000 or more	Goldfinch - \$70 to \$124
Great Blue Heron - \$275 to \$999	Otter (Family) - \$35 to \$69
Red Fox - \$125 to \$274	Great Horned Owl (Individual) - \$30
Eagle Business Level - \$1,000 or more	Monarch Business Level - \$250 - \$999

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

My membership level is _____

**Make checks payable to: Story County Conservation *Partners*
 56461 180th Street, Ames, IA 50010-9451; Phone (515) 232-2516**

Thank You!

We are grateful to all those who support Story County Conservation with donations of time, funding, and materials.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROSITY:

All *Partners* & Volunteers
 Mark Looschke
 Marty & Jolene Kelly
 Dan Spencer
 Roberta Deppe

Al Wagner
 Fred & June Reudy
 Steve Lekwa
 Outdoor Alliance Of Story County
 Marsha Hegland



STORY COUNTY
CONSERVATION
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2024 ELECTIONS

**YOUR
VOICE.
YOUR
VOTE.**



Vote in Person: Tuesday, Nov. 5.
Polls open at 7:00 A.M. and close at 8:00 P.M.

Vote by Mail: The deadline to request an
absentee ballot is October 21.

To find your voting location or request an absentee ballot, please contact the Story County Auditor at (515)382-7210