



Muscatine County Conservation FY24

Annual Report
July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024



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Annual Report of the Muscatine County Conservation Board

Fiscal Year 2024

July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

TO: The Muscatine County Board of Supervisors

REPORTED BY: Katie Hammond, Executive Director

Following is the annual report of the Muscatine County Conservation Board for the fiscal year (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024) as prescribed in Chapter 350.3 of the Code of Iowa (1993).

FY24 at a Glance

Staff Changes – Muscatine County Conservation had several major staff changes in FY24.

- In July 2023 Dave Bakke and Jill Ziegenhorn both retired after 35 years of service. Respectively, Nathaniel (Luke) Hart, Naturalist, and Lori Dietrich, Office Manager, were hired to replace them.
- Kristin Neeld (April 2023) and Trevor Ebeling (December 2023) both graduated from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. Trevor also moved into the house at Saulsbury that had been vacated with Bakke’s retirement.
- Curt Weiss retired after 43 years of service in November 2023, and Katie Hammond started in October 2023.
- Kent Kauffman, Ryne Brimeyer, and Dave Schuler continued to work in the same capacity. Michelle Berns was promoted to Naturalist II.



Discovery Park Updates – Discovery Park received several updates in Fy24. In Sept/October the roads within the park were re-asphalted and striped.

A new picnic shelter was installed near the Playground, filled with picnic tables, and opened for reservations.

Sidewalks were installed connecting the new shelter to the parking lot and the trail along with a sidewalk connecting the main road to the playground area, passing the Old Barn.



With the help of Bolton & Menk, the park map was updated. A large map sits inside the ELC and there are maps in the kiosks for guests to reference or take photos of.

Environmental Learning Center – The ELC had a water sprinkler pipe replaced, and updates were made to the fire alarm system. A Knox Box is now located on the front of the ELC, left of the doors, that allows the fire department a key and access if the fire alarm goes off and they need access.

Deep Lakes Park – Planning began for construction of a maintenance building at Deep Lakes Park. Bids came in high, so the Board continued to research ideas and ways to get a building that would fit our needs.

Work also continued for the construction of a new campground at Deep Lakes Park.

Deep Lakes Park, New Property – In December 2023, the Board purchased a property adjacent to Deep Lakes Park. The house on it was torn down, but a 2-car garage remains for storage. This could potentially be the location for a new shop.



Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area - The machine shed, shelters, and restrooms received new roofs due to hail damage and new gutters on the machine shed and lodge.

Electricity in the main campground was upgraded to 50-amp service.

New Brochures – The overall county brochure was updated. Deep Lakes Park wasn't included in the last version so Bi-State updated the map and staff updated the brochure in-house. Brochures were also created for Deep Lakes Park, Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area, Discovery Park, and canoe trips. The brochures are being printed in-house and updated as needed.



Mission Statement

The mission of the Muscatine County Conservation Board is to preserve and enhance natural areas and resources in Muscatine County for the use and benefit of the community; to preserve sufficient natural habitats in Muscatine County; to ensure the survival of native plants and animals; to acquire, develop and manage land for public hunting, fishing, camping and recreation; and to promote public appreciation and responsibility for the environment through education.

Board Roster

The five members of the Muscatine County Conservation Board are a decision-making and policy-making body appointed by the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors. The board's authority includes the acquisition and development of land, adoption of rules and regulations, comprehensive planning of an overall county conservation board program and specific site plans for individual areas. Other functions of the Board include hiring an executive director, developing a budget, and working with other governmental subdivisions to provide programs for the public.

The primary consideration of the board is to provide a balanced conservation, recreation, and education program to the citizens of the county, through proper planning and identification of needs and demands. The County Conservation Board can be the primary county agency dealing with natural resource issues in its county. (Source: Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards)

The **Muscatine County Conservation Board members** who served during this reporting period were:

Name	Title	Started	Expiration Date
Mark Petersen	Member	January 2015	December 2024
Mike Schulte	Member	February 2016	December 2025
Karen Hartman	Chair Person	August 2021	December 2026
Sherry Seright	Vice Chair	January 2023	December 2027
Julie Jindrich	Member	January 2023	December 2028

Note: Deb Elliott and Sue O'Donnell both retired from the Board in December 2022. Sherry and Julie can be switched, they are not sure which one was replacing Sue O'Donnell who retired a year early from the Board.

Meetings Held

Meetings are typically held on the third Monday of each month at 6:00 pm at the Environmental Learning Center.

The board held 12 regular meetings and ten (10) special meetings during the fiscal year.

Agendas and minutes from the meetings are on file at the Muscatine County Conservation Office, 3300 Cedar Street, PO Box 109, Muscatine, Iowa, 52761.



Muscatine County Conservation Staff

The Muscatine County Conservation Board maintained eight permanent full-time staff positions, one permanent part-time, and four seasonal positions.

Dave Bakke, retired in July 2023 after 35 years of service. He was a ranger/naturalist. Luke Hart was hired in May to cover his Naturalist duties. Michelle Berns was promoted to Naturalist II. Kristin (Krumm) Neeld was hired in 2022 (a new position) and has been fulfilling the law enforcement duties formerly handled by both Dave Bakke and Curt Weiss.

Jill Ziegenhorn also retired in July 2023 with 35 years of service. Lori Dietrich was hired in May as the new Office Manager.

Kristin Krumm attended the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) January through April, got married, and changed her last name to Neeld.

Trevor Ebeling was hired in February as the Assistant Park Officer/Maintenance Technician. He attended the ILEA August through December, and lives in the house at Saulsbury.

Curt Weiss retired from the Director position after 43 years of service in November (35 as Director). His replacement is Katie Hammond who started in October and now serves as the Director.

Kent Kauffman continues to serve as the Operations Supervisor, Ryne Brimeyer as a Ranger/Technician, and Dave Schuler as a permanent part-time taking care of the live animals and aquariums.

Two seasonal maintenance staff helped to take care of parks the summer of 2023: Trinidad Martinez & Dustin Purvis. Two summer externs helped with Environmental Education the summer of 2023: Kathi Eichelberger & Dana Kraft.

Permanent Muscatine County Conservation Employees

Name	Title	Dates Started
Curt Weiss	Director - Retired	1980 – Nov 2023
Jill Ziegenhorn	Office Manager - Retired	1986 – July 2023
Dave Bakke	Naturalist/Ranger - Retired	1986 – July 2023
Katie Hammond	Director	10/2023
Lori Dietrich	Office Manager	05/2023
Luke Hart	Naturalist I	05/2023
Michelle Berns	Naturalist II	12/2007
Kent Kauffman	Operations Supervisor	02/1986
Ryne Brimeyer	Ranger – Deep Lakes Park	10/2014
Kristin Neeld	Ranger	06/2022
Trevor Ebeling	Ranger – Saulsbury Bridge Rec. Area	02/2023
Dave Schuler	Animal Care & Aquariums	2017-Present (Permanent Part Time)



MCC Permanent Employees for FY24



Katie Hammond
Executive Director



Lori Dietrich
Office Manager



Kent Kauffman
Operations Supervisor



Luke Hart
Naturalist



Michelle Berns
Naturalist



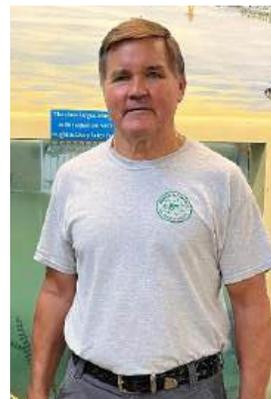
Ryne Brimeyer
Ranger/Maintenance



Kristin Neeld
Ranger/Maintenance



Trevor Ebeling
Ranger/Maintenance



Dave Schuler
Animal Care

MCC Seasonal, Temporary & On Call Employees for FY24

Name	Title	Dates Started
Kathi Eichelberger	EE Extern	June 2023 & June 2024
Dana Kraft	EE Extern	June 2023
Laura McDonald	EE Extern	June 2024
Trinidad Martinez	Mowing/Maintenance at Discovery Park	April 2023; 2024
Kyle Bentley	Mowing/Maintenance at Saulsbury	May 2024
Isabelle (Zuzu) Hartman	Deep Lakes Park Intern	May 2024
Beth Foor	Cabin Custodian	June 2024

A new seasonal position was started, the Cabin Custodian. This position is responsible for cleaning the cabins at Deep Lakes Park after families have rented them. It is a part-time, on call position without regular hours.

Volunteers

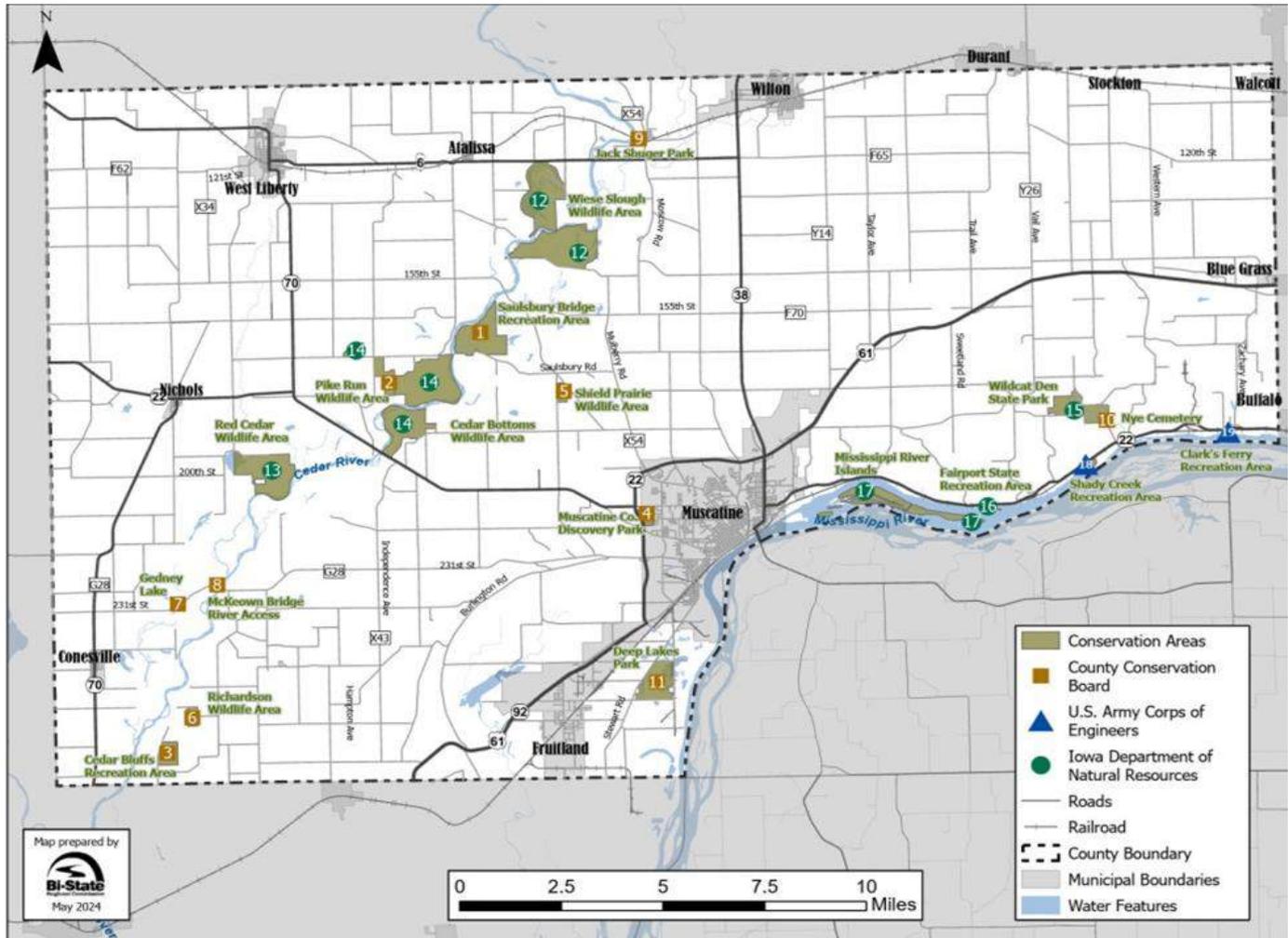
In addition, the conservation board used the services of volunteers, mostly coordinated by the United Way of Muscatine. These groups included school groups, Boy Scouts, HNI employees, and more.

Pictured below are a group from HNI employees helping with weeding the flower beds around the Environmental Learning Center, and seasonal employee, Trinidad on the mower in front of the Old Barn.



Area Inventory

Muscatine County Conservation currently owns and/or manages 11 areas comprising a total of approximately 1,755-acres for conservation, recreation, open spaces, and wildlife benefit. There was one acquisition in 2023, the Board purchased the property at 2554 Pettibone, just south of the main access to Deep Lakes Park.



		Information	Picnicking	Picnic Shelter	Playground	Electricity	Water	Restrooms	Camping	Cabins	Nature Center	Intrepretive Trail	Hiking Trail	Biking Trail	Native Prairie	Boat Ramp	Canoeing/Kayaking	Trail Riding	Accessible Area	Accessible Dock	Fishing	Hunting	Historic Site	Ice Fishing	Cross Country Skiing	
Muscatine County Conservation																										
1. Saulsbury Bridge Rec. Area	675		●	●	●	●	●	●	●				●			●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	
2. Pike Run Wildlife Area	182												●		●						●	●				
3. Cedar Bluffs Rec. Area	176												●								●	●			●	●
4. Discovery Park	100	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●				●	●			●		●	●
5. Shield Prairie	80														●							●				
6. Richardson Wildlife Area	77														●							●				
7. Gedney Lake	18		●														●				●					
8. McKeown Bridge Access	7		●													●	●				●					
9. Jack Shuger Memorial Park	4		●													●	●				●					
10. Nye Cemetery	1																									
11. Deep Lakes Park	435		●							●			●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●			

1. Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area – 675-acres

Location: Eight miles Northwest of Muscatine

911 Address: 2007 Saulsbury Road, Muscatine, Iowa

Date Acquired: The first 74-acres were purchased in 1968, around the Bridge to be developed into a park. In 1972 an additional 403-acres were purchased with the help of LAWCON funding. In 1986 & 1987 another 198-acres increased the park to 675-acres.

Management Restrictions: Land and Water Conservation Funds (LAWCON) were used on two of the main parcels to help purchase and provide amenities. With this funding the park must continue to be used for the recreational purposes set forth.

Current management: This mix of floodplain forest, open fields, creeks, and wetlands provides a diversity of wildlife habitats and outdoor recreation opportunities. 601-acres are managed for wildlife habitat and public hunting. 74-acres are used as multipurpose recreation.

Existing facilities: The reservable Saulsbury Lodge, 3 campgrounds, 2 latrines, shower house, dump station, firewood shed, 2 reservable picnic shelters, 2 modern playgrounds, 2 Maintenance Shop buildings, Cedar River Access, accessible fishing dock at Chicken Creek, and Chicken Creek boat landing.

Updates in FY24:

- Roof Replacements – the machine shed, shelters, lodge, and restrooms received new roofs due to hail damage in a previous fiscal year. The Machine shed and lodge also received new gutters.
- Campground Electricity – The electric in the Main Campground was upgraded to include 50-amp service, and camping prices increased. Camp pads were also leveled and some were lengthened to meet the demands of longer campers.
- Natural Resources – Prescribed burning operations took place to help control woody species and prep food plot areas. Food plots were planted. Hazard trees were removed from the campground and other areas within the park. Cutting, spraying, and other measures were taken to help control invasive species.
- Tree planting- ten trees were planted in the campground area at Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area thanks to a Community Forestry Grant from the Iowa DNR, and one at Chicken Creek.
- Mowing – Normal maintenance took place at Saulsbury including mowing, spraying as needed, flooding clean-up, and other normal maintenance.

Planned Improvements:

- Continue to remove invasive species as needed and monitor tree and woodland health.
- Replace the Chicken Creek restroom with a new latrine
- Improvements to the Lodge including painting indoors, new siding, windows, and flooring.



Camping at Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area

The Conservation Board manages three campgrounds at Saulsbury Bridge Recreation area including the Main Campground with 24 sites and 20-30-50-amp electric, the River Campground with 11 sites, and the Tent Only primitive area with multiple sites.

In FY24 camping fees were raised to \$25/site/night for the Main campground with electricity upgraded to include 50-amp service. Prices increased to \$20 for the River Campground, and \$10 for the primitive.



The Board held promotional deals to save guests money.

1. **FREE Wednesdays!** Every Wednesday night is free!
2. Permanently disabled guest can stay in the Main Campground for just \$20 per night.
3. **Two-for-One** – On the second weekend of every month, if a guest pays for Friday night, they can camp for free on Saturday night.
4. **Camping Coupons** – Booklets are available for \$125. Guests get 6 nights of camping for the price of 5.

There is a shower house, firewood, playground, dump station, and fresh water in the Main Campground. River campers are allowed to use these amenities and have a pit latrine. In FY24, total camping revenue was \$31,689 with a total of 1,690 Camper Use Nights.

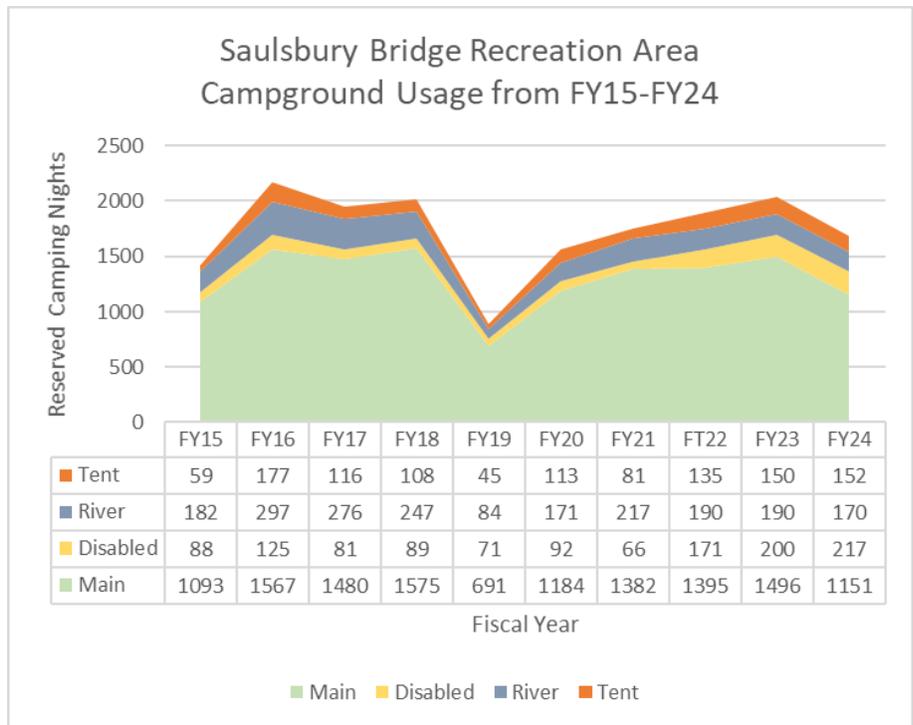
- The **Main Campground** had 1368 Camper Use Nights. (This is the number of nights that sites were filled throughout the fiscal year.)
- The **River Campground** was filled 170 Camper Use Nights.
- The **Tent Camping** was utilized 152 Camper Use Nights.

The Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area campground brought in \$28,939 in camping revenue and another \$2,239 in firewood sales.

This chart (right) shows campground use data for the past 10 years.

FY19 held a major flood where the campground was closed for a prolonged period of time, which is evident in the dip.

Note – permanently disabled is sectioned out in this graph. They are camping in the main campground but pay the same amount as guests in the River Campground.



Saulsbury Lodge



The Saulsbury Lodge is available for group rentals. It offers a pleasant option for small to medium sized group gatherings. It is suitable year-round for picnics, family gatherings, youth groups, church groups, and small receptions.

The Lodge comfortably seats up to 75 people with tables and chairs provided. There is a small kitchen area with fridge and stove, and modern restrooms. The room can be temperature controlled with electric baseboard heat and air conditioning.

Behind the lodge is a nice overflow patio with a picnic

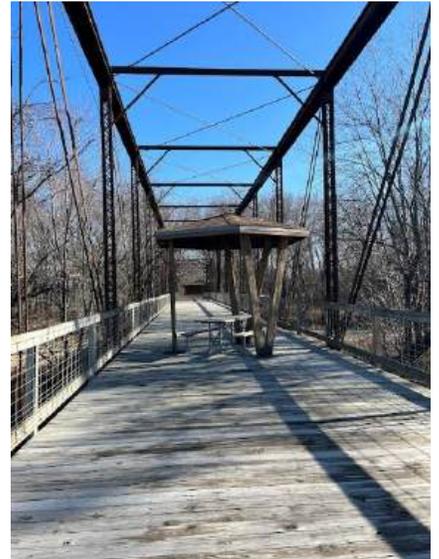
table and grill. A nice wide path leads out to the historic Saulsbury Bridge where guests can look out over the Cedar River. Guests also have access to the nearby campground, and hiking trails.

In FY24, a daily rental for most users was \$90, and \$60 for youth groups. We require a \$200 deposit from all renters. Those wishing to hold a wedding reception at the Saulsbury Lodge are required to rent the facility for three days for \$350. This allows a day for set-up, a day for the event, and plenty of time for clean-up.

Documented Use: In FY24, there were 67 daytime rentals and 3 weddings held. Showers (baby, bridal, & gender reveals) were among the most popular rentals with 17, followed by scout groups with 14. There were 7 family reunions, 6 birthday parties, 5 graduation parties, 2 church groups, and 16 general reservations. In total the Saulsbury Lodge brought in \$7,735 in revenue. This was almost twice as much as budgeted for.

A total of 114 environmental education programs were held at Saulsbury with a total attendance of 2,518 people.

There are two reservable picnic shelters at Saulsbury. The Boat Ramp shelter had one reservation for a total revenue of \$25. The Chicken Creek Shelter had 20 reservations and approximately \$500 in reservation fees.



2. Pike Run Wildlife Area – 182 acres

Location: Six miles east of Nichols and 10 miles NW of Muscatine

911 Address: 1729 Iron City Avenue, Nichols, IA

Date Acquired: March 23, 1983 the first 77.37 acres were purchased. Additional land 103.09 acres purchased August 10, 1990.

Management Restrictions: This area was purchased with the help of Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant funds along with the Muscatine Prairie Endowment Fund and Pheasants Forever. The area must be maintained for hunting.

Current management: This wildlife area is primarily used for wildlife habitat and public hunting. There is a beautiful wooden plank bridge that spans Pike Run creek, allowing people to get to the far side. Some mowed hiking trails are maintained for access by staff and the public.

Existing facilities: Pike Run features a native sand prairie, oak timber, wetlands, and Pike Run creek travels through the area. There are two small parking lots, a bridge across Pike Run, and about a quarter-mile trail. Adjoins to the DNR area Cedar Bottoms WMA.



Updates in FY24: Invasive species removal and general maintenance.

Planned Improvements: Upgrades to the bridge with boards re-attached or replaced as needed. Continued habitat improvements including controlling invasive species and prescribed fire.

Potential Expansion: A 2017 North American Waterfowl Conservation Act grant was received by Ducks Unlimited. It included purchasing a 34-acre parcel to be added to Pike Run. Due to various circumstances, the parcel was purchased by The Nature Conservancy. TNC completed habitat work on the parcel and has converted it to a high-quality prairie.

Money is still being held by DU for transferring this property from TNC to MCCB. A 3-way agreement is underway to transfer the funds directly to TNC, who will then give the property to MCCB.

3. Cedar Bluffs Recreation Area – 177 acres

Location: Six miles west of Letts, Iowa

911 Address: 2727 Casey Avenue, Letts, IA

Date Acquired: 2 parcels acquired December 31, 1976 totaling 177.17 acres.

Management Restrictions: Purchased with LAWCON funding.

Current management: For wildlife habitat purposes and compatible recreational uses such as hunting, hiking, & mushroom hunting. This is a popular area for hunting rabbits, deer, turkey, and squirrels.

Existing trails: Mowed hiking trails.

Existing facilities: Parking lot.

Improvements this fiscal year: A spring burn took place in the prairie. Staff kept trails mowed, removed invasive woody species, and kept the park looking nice.



Planned Improvements: In FY25 staff hopes to conduct more prescribed burns, map the trails, and work to control invasive species.

Documented use for this area: None, although we know it is a popular spot for hunting.

4. Discovery Park - 100 acres

Location: On Cedar Street in Muscatine, just off HWY 61.

911 Address: 3300 Cedar Street, PO Box 109 Muscatine

Date Acquired: August 1, 1995. The initial property was county property, formerly the location of the County Farm, and was turned over to Conservation. The 10-acre parcel to the west was purchased from June and Etal Pries in 1996 for \$24,000.

Current management: This area is Muscatine County Conservation's premier area. It is managed for people, education, and wildlife habitat.

Management restrictions: This area is within the city limits of Muscatine. There is no alcohol, hunting, or trapping allowed.

Existing facilities: Environmental Learning Center, Offices, 3 reservable picnic shelters, nature themed playground, 1.5-miles of paved hiking/biking trail, 2-miles of mowed trail, 2 ponds, accessible fishing dock on Discovery Pond, fishing dock (without good access) on Heron Hideaway, wildlife viewing blind, outdoor raptor enclosure, 2 modern outdoor restrooms, 1 latrine, historic cemetery, Muscatine Arboretum, and the Old Barn.



Improvements this fiscal year: The roads at Discovery Park were re-asphalted and stripped. A new picnic shelter was installed by the playground, sidewalks were run from the parking area to the shelter and from the shelter to the playground sidewalk. A sidewalk was also installed that goes from the playground area, past the Old Barn, to the main road.

Planned Improvements: We would like to increase accessibility by adding another sidewalk that takes visitors past the Raptor enclosure to the dock at Heron Hideaway and to the backside of the Environmental Learning Center, plus another spur leading to the wildlife viewing blind.

Documented use: This is by far our busiest park. There are walkers, joggers, and bicyclists on the trails daily. In addition, many field trips, public programs, and nature camps take place here and there

is a lot of traffic to our offices for paperwork and rentals. Although we do not count every person who enters the park, we do document guests to our programs and the ELC.

A total of 3 programs were held only in Discovery Park with a total attendance of 83 people. In total, there were 234 programs held between the ELC and Discovery Park with a total attendance of 3,592 people.

Discovery Park has three reservable picnic shelters. Shelter #1 is the biggest, located near the Environmental Learning Center. It rents for \$40. There was a total of 52 rentals in FY24 bringing in approximately \$1,800 in revenue. Shelter #2 is the shelter by the playground. It was just completed in April 2024, and only open for a portion of the FY. It had 13 rentals with approximately \$560 in fees collected. Shelter #3 is the small shelter near Discover Pond. It had 8 rentals for a total of \$160.



Environmental Learning Center

The Environmental Learning Center at Discovery Park is a 10,500 square foot facility.

Date Acquired: July 20, 2005

Current management: The ELC has dual purpose. First and foremost, it is a state-of-the-art interpretive center. Exhibits interpret our natural history, habitats, and wildlife. It is also the location for the MCC Offices.

Learning Center Hours: Monday – Friday from 8:00 am – 4:30 pm; Saturday & Sunday from noon - 4:00 pm. Closed most holidays.

Featured Exhibits: two 1,200-gallon aquariums with native fish; natural history exhibits featuring the change in habitats and wildlife in Iowa; live animals including snakes, turtles, a frog, a toad, and a salamander on display; outdoor live raptor exhibit; over 100 mounted animals; an old hunting/trapping shack; Kids' exploration area; Mr. Bakke's Book Nook; and several interactive displays.



Existing facilities: Conservation offices; exhibit space; public restrooms; large classroom with center divider; access to all the amenities in Discovery Park.

Improvements this fiscal year: The ELC had a pipe burst on October 2, 2024. The broken pipe was underneath the ELC and water was pouring into the basement. The pipe was rerouted up and over the display area. The Fire alarm system was also upgraded in the ELC. There is now an automatic call-out if the alarm goes off. A Knox Box was added outside the front door so the fire department will have access.

Planned Improvements: We would like to add displays or traveling displays to the ELC and enhance the children's area. This could be done by purchasing new games and activities, children's sized furniture, or other fun items.

Documented Use: The ELC (alone) was the site of 34 environmental education programs for 742 people. An additional 197 programs were held between the ELC and Discovery Park for 2,767 participants. This includes school field trips and groups who have sessions both indoors and out.

In total, there were 234 groups who utilized the ECL & DP for specific programs, with 3,592 people in attendance.

There was a total of 6,077 people who visited the ELC on their own, not as part of an organized program.

Fourteen (14) groups reserved the Classroom at the ELC for meetings during FY 24. Five of those groups were charged and paid a total of \$260. We do not charge for other county offices, or conservation groups to utilize the classroom.



5. Shield Prairie - 81 acres

Location: From HWY 22, go 2-miles north on Seven Springs Rd

911 Address: 1825 Seven Springs Road, Muscatine, IA

Dates Acquired: This area is owned by the Iowa DNR and managed by Muscatine County Conservation. The DNR purchased the land from Dorothy M. Shield in 1985 for \$65,000 using non-game funding. The current agreement is good through December 31, 2036.

Management restrictions: A management plan was created covering fiscal years 2023-2036.

Current management: Management objectives for this area are to maintain diversity and integrity of the remnant prairie. To promote wildlife diversity and sustainability and to protect ornate box turtles, a SGCN species found on site.

Existing facilities: small parking lot in the SW corner off 7 Springs Road.

Improvements this fiscal year: A new entrance sign was purchased and hung in the parking lot. The old sign was completely missing.

Planned Improvements: We would like to apply for a Wildlife Diversity Program grant to purchase herbicides to help control woody invasive species. Krenite for a bud inhibitor, and Milestone or Transline to treat black locust stumps. We would also like to establish prescribed fire burn breaks for a spring burn.

Documented use: None – this area is open to the public and used when we are not present. There were not any public programs held at Shield Prairie this year.



6. Richardson Wildlife Area – 77 Acres

Location: From 231st, go south on Echo Avenue 4-miles, turn right on 260th and go half a mile. 5.5-miles NW of Letts, Iowa.

911 Address: 1344 260th Street, Letts, IA

Date Acquired: 1997 the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation purchased the property for Muscatine County Conservation with the idea we would raise funds to purchase it back from them. A wildlife habitat stamp grant was applied for in May 1997 to purchase the property. It was approved and a funding agreement in place in 1998. The Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund grant was successful to cover 75% of the costs. On June 9, 1999 – the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation transferred the property to Muscatine County Conservation.

Management Restrictions: This area was purchased with a combination of Wildlife Habitat Stamp Funds (\$22,500) and funding from Pheasants Forever (\$7,500), for a total purchase price of \$30,000 and must remain open to public hunting.

Current management: This area is managed for wildlife habitat. It has a farm number from FSA Farm #131. There is an agreement with the nearby property owner for a food plot on the tillable acres. The board works to maintain habitat, reduce invasive species, and promote native plants and wildlife.



Existing facilities: There is a cable parking lot, with a gravel base. We maintain a mowed hiking trail down to the creek. There is a low water crossing that is accessible during some water levels, but needs work to get equipment across.

Improvements this fiscal year: We conducted a prescribed fire on two sections of the property to promote fire dependent species in the prairies and set-back non-natives. The food plot is being cash rented by Bob Sywassink.

Planned Improvements: We would like to do work on the low water crossing so that we are able to get equipment to the other side of the creek for management.

Documented use: None – no public programs were held at Richardson. We have several people who utilize the area for hunting, but do not have documentation.

7. Gedney Lake – 18 acres

Location: 1-mile west of the Cedar River on 231st Street (G28)

911 Address: 1302 231st Street, Conesville, IA

Date Acquired: On November 1, 1967 the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors granted management control of the Gedney Lake Area, including the old road east of the bridge to the Conservation Board for use as a fishing access area.

Restricted Use: This area received a Marine Fuel Tax grant to install a concrete boat landing in 1981. The grant covered half the cost \$2,652 x 2. Then in 1999 a WRAC grant was secured to armor the shore, place a picnic table and two trees (\$1,417 grant)

Current management: This area is a nice picnic spot, an access for Gedney Lake, and a fishing area.

Existing facilities: The old bridge still spans $\frac{3}{4}$ of the lake. The public can picnic or sit on the bridge to enjoy the area. There is also a boat landing and parking area that can be used for launching boats or fishing from the shore.

Improvements this fiscal year: None – just normal maintenance of mowing and weed eating as needed.

Inundation: When the Cedar River floods, the boat landing and lower parking area go under water. The bridge is high enough to avoid flooding.



Planned Improvements: This area could potentially use more rock, especially after any high-water events.

Documented use for this area: None, although we know people are using it from their tire tracks, and other signs that people have been there.

8. McKeown Bridge River Access – 7 acres

Location: West side of Cedar River bridge on 231st (G28); about 6.5-miles west of Muscatine.

911 Address: 1399 231st Street, Conesville, IA

Date Acquired: The County purchased this ground on December 31, 1968 from Jane McKeown. Eventually, management of the site was turned over to Muscatine County Conservation to build the boat access. The ramp was extended in 1982 and rip rap added for streambank stabilization in 1987.

Management Restrictions: None

Current Management: The area is used as a boat access to the Cedar River or for fishing from shore. We actively keep the access open from trees, debris, and mow as needed.

Existing facilities: Gravel parking lot.

Improvements this fiscal year: Removed some trees that had fallen over the entrance road.

Planned Improvements: Habitat work, continued rock and grading, keep an eye on rip rap and vegetation.



9. Jack Shuger Memorial Park - 4 acres

Location: Driving north through Moscow on X54, turn left (west) onto Cedar St. The Park is at the end of the Street.

911 Address: 1515 Cedar Street, Moscow, IA

Date Acquired: April 20, 1967 (boat landing) & October 2, 1967 (park)

Management Restrictions: A Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) Grant was used to acquire 1.5 acres; create access roads and the parking lot; build the boat ramp, shelter house, latrine, picnic facilities, and improve the water system. Playground equipment is included in the LAWCON stuff, although it was funding with a big capital campaign and numerous donations.

Current management: Maintained as an access to the Cedar River for boat launch and fishing.

Existing facilities: Reservable picnic shelter, modern playground (built May 2001), restrooms, basketball court, stairs down to the boat landing, boat landing (boat landing moved upstream and redone in 1995 with the help of a WRAC grant), bench

Improvements this fiscal year: A volunteer group through United Way came and did a bunch of clean-up work including picking up trash, raking the playground area, cutting back brush, and cleaning up around the shelter. We have a mowing agreement for Jack Shuger with Bob Peck.

Planned Improvements: Continue to maintain the area and keep it a great place for people to go.

Documented Use: The shelter at Jack Shuger was reserved 6 times with approximately \$150 in user fees collected.



10. Nye Cemetery – 1 acre

Location: One-mile north of HWY 22 on Wildcat Den Road

911 Address: 1915 Wildcat Den Road, Muscatine, IA

Date Acquired: July 22, 1988

Current management: This one-acre pioneer cemetery is the final resting place for Benjamin Nye, the first settler in Muscatine County.

Management Restrictions: Managed as a pioneer cemetery.

Existing facilities: There is a small parking lot to the North. There are also Multiple headstones.

The Cemetery is near the Pine Creek Grist Mill, which was built and operated by Benjamin Nye in the 1840's. It has been restored to operating condition and is able to grind various grains.

Improvements this fiscal year: We have a mowing agreement with Bob Peck to keep the area mowed. He does a great job keeping the area looking great.

Planned Improvements: There are some problem trees that need to be removed including one large dead ash tree.



11. Deep Lakes Park - 435 acres

Location: From HWY 61, turn onto Dick Drake Way, go straight to Stewart Road, turn right, go to Pettibone Ave and turn left. Deep Lakes is about a mile down on your right.

911 Address Main Access (Beach, Cabins, & Boat Ramp): 2552 Pettibone Ave., Muscatine, IA

Lake Jewell (parking lot and boat landing): 2443 57th Street, Muscatine

Island Lake (parking lot): 2531 Stewart Road, Muscatine

Ray's Pond (parking lot, maintenance shed, small gazebo shelter): 2480 41st Street, Muscatine

Belle's Pond (parking lot, future campground): 2488 41st St, Muscatine

Lake Chester (North Parking Lot): 2514 41st St., Muscatine

Dates Acquired:

December 20, 2012 – 398 acres donated from WG Block Co. (valued at \$2,381,500)

January 8, 2013 - 36 acres donated from WG Block Co. (valued at \$207,500)

December 29, 2023 - 1 acre purchased from John & Tammy Ramirez for \$184,457.41

Existing facilities: 120-acres of clear deep-water lakes; numerous small lakes and ponds; several parking lots (see addresses); public restrooms at the Beach/Boat Access on Lake Chester; porta pots at other locations; Boat access on Lake Chester & Jewel Lake; accessible dock on Lake Chester, and swimming beach; 1.4-miles of paved biking trail, 4 reservable cabins.

Current management: For outdoor recreation including fishing, paddling, swimming beach, bike trail with connection to the Greater Muscatine Trail System, environmental education.



Improvements this fiscal year:

The Board purchased an adjacent property to add to the park. It could be the location of the future maintenance shop at Deep Lakes Park. We kept a 2-car garage but took the house and failing septic system out.

The septic tank at the cabins was pumped.

Some Muskies were stocked by the Iowa DNR.

Work began on a levee improvement project and the Board and Supervisors agreed to allow them to haul sand from Deep Lakes Park on the South side. They began hauling in FY24 but were only about a third finished at the end of the FY.

A new road was developed as a 911 address for the cabins. “Lakeview Cabin Drive” is now an interior road in the park that leads to the Cabins.



Deep Lakes Park Planned Improvements:

Plans are underway to build a maintenance shop at Deep Lakes Park that could include indoor storage and temperature-controlled area for maintenance and an office.

Work is also continuing to build a campground at Deep Lakes Park with septic and water. This project is funded by ARPA dollars so it is imperative to have contracts signed for work by the end of Calendar Year, December 31, 2024 and all dollars must be spent by December 31, 2026.

Documented use:

Environmental Education – there were a total of 17 public programs held at Deep Lakes Park with 246 participants. The Federation of Christian Athletes (FCA) held a fishing tournament on Deep Lakes Park with 17 participants. Louisa County Conservation brought a group of about 20 vision impaired nature campers to swim at the beach and paddle for a day.

Cabin Rentals – The cabins at Deep Lakes Park were rented by 153 groups. Each of these stayed at least 2-nights (required), many of them stayed longer.

Cabins 1 & 3 are one-bedroom and sleep a max of 4 people.

Cabins 2 & 4 are two-bedroom and sleep a max of 8.

Cabin Rentals During FY24 (this is an estimate since some of the funds came in prior to the fiscal year):

- Cabin 1 - 25 groups approximately - \$5,890
- Cabin 2 - 40 groups approximately - \$12,325
- Cabin 3 - 34 groups approximately - \$8,915
- Cabin 4 - 54 groups approximately - \$17,737

The actual total cabin revenue for FY24 was \$42,027.



Publicity and Marketing

Muscatine County Conservation Newsletter

- The Environmental Education staff work cooperatively with the Office Manager to edit, design, write, and distribute four issues of the “Conservation News” Newsletter each year.
- It includes programs and special events, a donation form for the Friends of Muscatine County Conservation, a fun page for kids, and information about our parks and wildlife areas.
- The newsletter is offered online and via email. Approximately 1054 subscribers receive the newsletter in the mail while another 550+ receive it via email. The newsletter is available to view or download at MuscatineCountyConservation.com/news-events/mccb-newsletter/

Websites

MuscatineCountyConservation.com –is our main website. It is in need of an update to be more user friendly on all devices.

Office staff have access to update and add information to the website. It is our priority to keep this website up-to-date and current with events and information.

The website includes information about all of our areas, activities, events and education, news, job opportunities, and volunteer announcements.



MyCountyParks.com – this website is managed by Iowa’s County Conservation Systems (ICCS) and represents all 99 County Conservation Boards in Iowa.

Muscatine County Conservation has the ability to update our own page adding all sorts of information. We added shelters, campgrounds and other information to this website and continue to keep the website current with information about our parks and events.

In FY25, we are hoping to enlist the ecommerce function of MyCountyParks.com and allow cabin rentals and campsites to be reservable online.

Job announcements are always posted on MCP because it is the premier posting location for all County Conservation jobs and where people go to find them.



News Releases & Media

- When requested, radio and television interviews are conducted.
- Events are advertised on Facebook, the website, in our newsletter, flyers, and some in-house advertising.

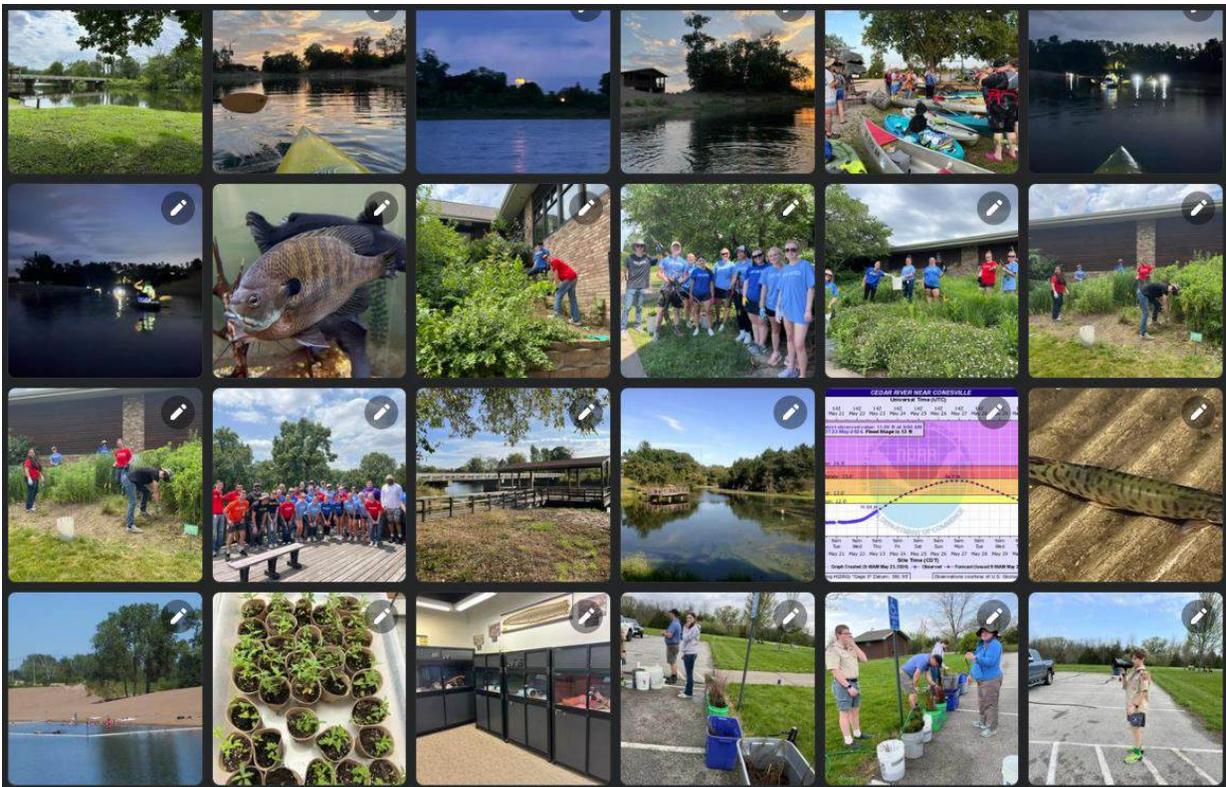
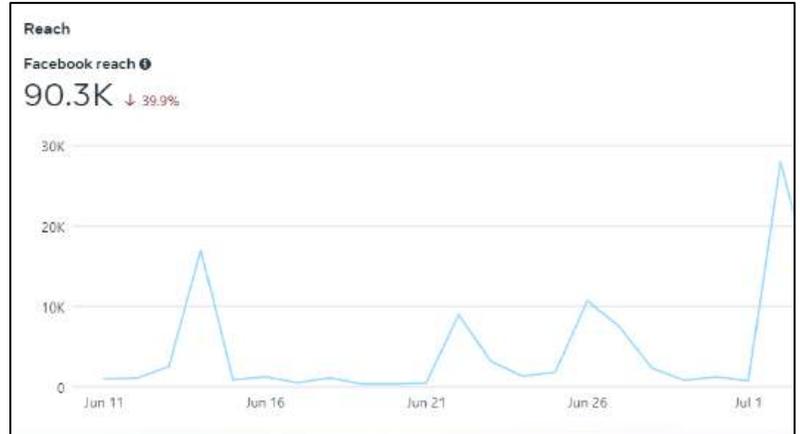
Muscatine County Conservation Facebook Page

Muscatine County Conservation maintains a Facebook page titled, “Muscatine County Conservation Board.” It is used to advertise programs and events, share photos, and communicate with the public. Facebook continues to be a good way to reach people and advertise programs, camps, and other events.

We currently have 4,383 people who “follow” our page. Of those, 70% are women. Throughout the fiscal year we had a reach of 90,300 people in total through Facebook.

The posts with the most reach in FY24 was a post on May 22, 2024 about the Swimming Beach at Deep Lakes Park opening which reached 135,483 people. The same post had the most reactions 1,029 and most comments, 308.

Videos that include our live animals continue to be very popular.



Environmental Education

The goal of Muscatine County Conservation’s environmental education (EE) program is to promote stewardship through various programs and events on conservation, recreation, and education. Naturalists provide a diversity of programs to a variety of audiences ranging from toddlers to senior citizens with school field trips, public programs, summer nature camps, and civic groups.

The Board maintains two full-time, permanent Naturalists to provide high quality, award winning Environmental Education programs in the County. In a typical year we also hire two externs to help with programming and an animal caretaker to help with feeding live animals, cleaning cages, and the aquariums.

Thirty percent (30%) of our Environmental Education programs take place in the schools and another 28% take place at Discovery Park and the Environmental Learning Center.

Programs at The Muskie Learning Center (MELC) and other local preschools account for the location for 16% of our programming.

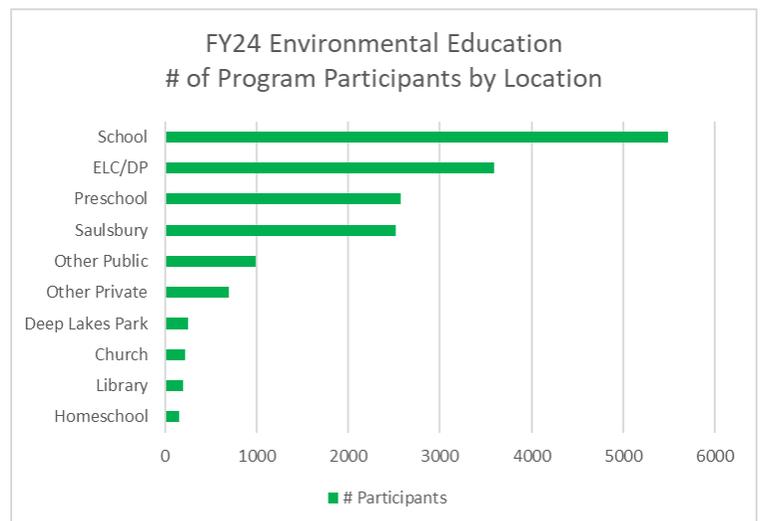
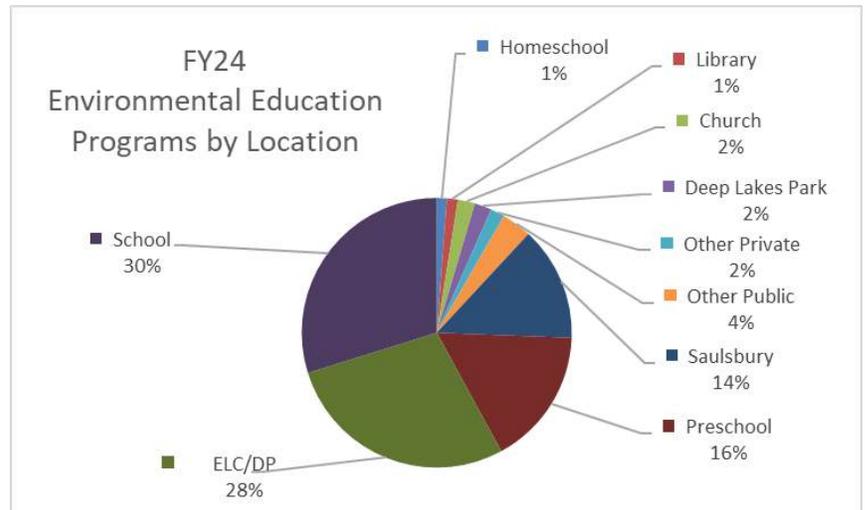
Fourteen percent (14%) of our EE efforts took place at Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area. We held 114 groups at Saulsbury, including a full week of School of the Wild with the West Liberty 4th Graders.

A total of 832 environmental education programs (groups) were held in FY24, with a total of 16,670 people in attendance.

We saw every K-5th grade student at least once, and sometimes multiple times during the schoolyear because of a unique partnership with AIM (Aligned Impact Muscatine.)

School Programming – There were 248 programs (groups) held in the schools, with a total of 5,494 students in attendance. These are programs where we take environmental education into the classrooms. Types of Public Programs

- **Civic/Private** – Programs given to civic or private groups, not open to the general public. This year 1,367 participants attended 37 such programs. (ex. Mott’s group, etc...)
- **Hunter Education** – Typically, two education safety classes are offered each year. A total of 54 people attended Hunter Education classes this fiscal year.
- **Nature Camps** – Summer & Winter nature camps are offered to youth. There were 1,374 youth who attended throughout 41 nature camps.



- **Public Programs** – 2,071 people attended 23 public programs that are open to the general public. This includes 186 people who participated in hikes and 552 who attend events with a display. The biggest Public Programs were the Halloween Hike Drive Thru at Saulsbury (1,000) and the Bald Eagle Watch (100) and the Farmer’s Market (175).



- **Display** – There were a total of 552 people who visited display booths that included live animals and environmental education.
- **Hikes** – A total of 186 people attended nature themed hikes with our naturalists.
- **Library Programs** - 209 people attended programs provided in conjunction with our local libraries.
- **Muscatine Arts Center** - 322 visitors attended programs we conducted with the Muscatine Arts Center.
- **Scouts** – 335 programs took place with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
- **Volunteers** – 56 volunteers assisted with projects in County Parks.
- **Riverboats** – 158 riverboat travelers toured the Environmental Learning Center and learned about Raptors.

Ambassador Animals

Muscatine County Conservation has a group of working reptiles, amphibians, and raptors who help teach environmental education. These critters visit and teach thousands of people/students every year. These brave critters travel in and out of schools, parks, and libraries to promote conservation.

Raptors

- Nadie the Barred Owl
- Thurston the Great Horned Owl
- Skipper the Red-Tailed Hawk
- Asio the Screech Owl

Snakes

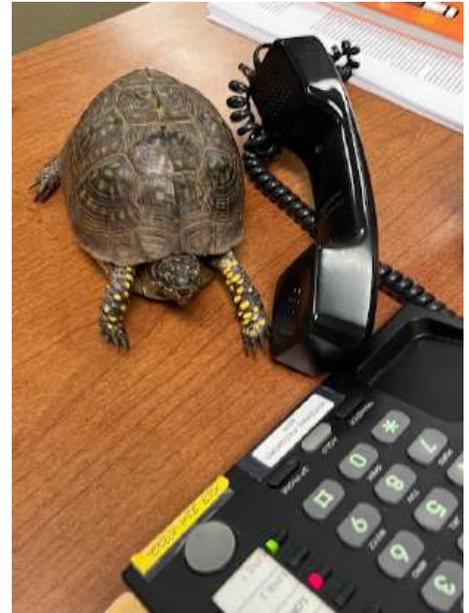
- Louie the speckled kingsnake
- Kajika the fox snake
- Plus, to new snakes a young speckled king snake and a corn snake

Turtles

- Sheldon the Soft-Shell Turtle
- Mr. B the Blanding Turtle
- Murtle the Painted Turtle
- Timmy the red-eared slider
- TT the 3-toed box turtle (not native)

Amphibians

- Lio the Gray Tree Frog
- Tubbs the Tiger Salamander
- Elivs the American Toad



Grants Received in FY24

Safety Grant – We also applied for and received a safety grant to purchase a new AED that is compatible with the local first responders. With this grant we were able to purchase a new Physio-Control LIFEPAK CR2 AED for the Environmental Learning Center. The total grant was for \$2,055.90.

Iowa DNR Community Forestry Grant – Muscatine County Conservation received a grant from the Iowa DNR to plant trees at Saulsbury. This grant was available to counties who were affected by the Derecho. The grant was a 50% match with \$1,213.50 paid by the grant and the same paid from our budget. We planted 4 thornless honey locust, 3 swamp white oaks, 2 sugar maples, and two northern red oaks at Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area. In addition, we planted 5 autumn brilliance serviceberries at the Arboretum.

Cooperative Programs and Agreements

- A. **Iowa Department of Natural Resources** – An agreement continues for management and development of Shield Prairie.
- B. **Muscatine County Conservation Foundation** – The Board continues to work with the MCC Foundation for fundraising and grant writing as needed. Visitors donate to the Foundation through the Newsletter or donation box in the Learning Center.
- C. **Iowa's County Conservation Systems (ICCS)** – Muscatine County Conservation continues to work with ICCS on a variety of projects including the MyCountyParks.com website, legislative priorities, trainings and more. In FY25 we are hoping to open an ecommerce site through MyCountyParks.com so that we are able to take online reservations for cabins, shelters, and campsites.

Projects Planned for FY25

Environmental Learning Center – We are in desperate need of getting the geothermal fixed inside the ELC.

Deep Lakes Park Campground – We are working with Bolton & Menk to build a campground at Deep Lakes Park that will have septic and water along with approximately 25 full-hook-up campsites and a shower house. Funding is secured.

Deep Lakes Park Maintenance Shop – Plans are underway to build a new maintenance shop at DLP that will have a small office area and some temperature-controlled space for working on equipment or projects. Funding is partially secured.

Deep Lakes Park Large Picnic Shelter – \$100,000 has been budgeted from REAP to install a large reservable picnic shelter at Deep Lakes Park.

Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area – The vault restrooms at Chicken Creek are scheduled to be replaced this coming year.

Saulsbury Lodge – We plan on gaining estimates and working on plans to renovate the Saulsbury Lodge. It is in need of new siding and windows, indoor flooring, and a nice indoor paint job.

Vehicle Replacements – Two patrol vehicles are scheduled for replacement this year including the 2017 Tahoe and 2018 Truck.

Other Top Priorities - Large Projects

Deep Lakes Park

- Build the campground
- Install a picnic shelter
- Continue trail connections
- Expand cabins

Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area

- Lodge improvements
- Remove old shelter by river campground, potentially rebuild?
- Replace restroom by Chicken Creek
- Habitat work

Discovery Park

- Continue improving sidewalk connections – wildlife viewing blind, Raptor Exhibit, Heron Hideaway dock
- Replace foot bridge on creek (mowed) trail
- Landscaping/weeding control

Environmental Learning Center

- Fix and maintain geothermal
- Traveling displays?
- Add or change up displays, add stuff to kids' exploration area

Richardson Wildlife Area

- Fix low water crossing so that we are able to get equipment to the other side of the creek

Pike Run

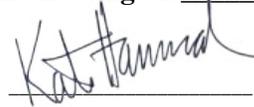
- Updates/repairs to the boardwalk

Attachments

- A – Administrative and General Basic Expenses
- B – Conservation Reserve / Land Acquisition
- C – REAP

Approved by the Muscatine County Conservation Board at the meeting on August 19, 2024.

Sherry Seright, Chair



Katie Hammond, Director

Attachment A – FY24 Expenditure Report

General Basic Expenditures

Administration

Director Salary	\$ 223,614.06
Uniform Allowance	\$ 500.00
Cell Phone Allowance	\$ 902.62
FICA	\$ 17,098.12
IPERS	\$ 16,454.25
Health Insurance - Admin	\$ 27,589.98
Annuity	\$ 5,200.00

\$ 291,359.03

Conservation Board	\$ 759.37
Office Supplies	\$ 1,634.33
Uniforms	\$ 498.75
Postage/Mailing	\$ 1,532.45
Telephone	\$ 1,836.26
Tuition/Registration	\$ 1,446.32
Meals & Lodging	\$ 352.94
Dues/Memberships	\$ 2,440.00

\$ 10,500.42

Maintenance & Operations

Salaries (Maintenance/Rangers)	\$ 245,097.32
Uniform	\$ 1,484.59
Cell Phone Allowance	\$ 1,800.00
Salaries (Part time - Cabin Custodian)	\$ 690.00
Salaries (Part Time - Maintenance)	\$ 28,136.00
Sick Pay Reimbursement	\$ 1,596.92
FICA	\$ 21,049.75
IPERS	\$ 23,209.44
Health Insurance - Admin	\$ 38,293.26
Annuity	\$ 9,600.00

\$ 370,957.28

Fertilizer/Seed/Herbicides	\$ 1,356.59
Construction/Maintenance Supplies	\$ 1,842.52
Road Rock/Rip Rap/Dirt	\$ 1,225.13
Custodial Supplies	\$ 5,433.46
Fuels	\$ 15,416.26
Equipment and hand tools	\$ 1,734.88
Safety/Protective Equipment	\$ 2,039.67
Drainage District Taxes	\$ 2,353.00
Temp Help (Camp Host/Project Mgr.)	\$ 4,125.00
Tuition/Registration	\$ 615.00
Meals & Lodging	\$ -
Utilities	\$ 3,007.25



Electric - SB House & Shower House	\$ 865.04
Electric - SB Campground	\$ 4,001.72
Electric - SB Service Building	\$ 1,196.10
Electric - Chicken Creek	\$ 647.57
Electric - Boat Ramp	\$ 507.79
Electric - Jack Shuger	\$ 343.13
Electric - Deep Lakes Park - Cabins	\$ 4,284.56
Electric - Deep Lakes Park - Shop	\$ 458.08
Electric - Saulsbury	\$ 2,428.29
Electric - Environmental Learning Center	\$ 17,669.21
Well Sampling / Service	\$ 186.00
Water Conditioner - SBRA	\$ 252.27
Vehicle Maintenance/Repair	\$ 5,009.07
Building Maintenance /Repair	\$ 23,467.97
Equipment Maintenance/ Repair	\$ 7,040.82
Rental Machinery	\$ -
Waste Disposal Service	\$ 12,029.22
Certification Costs ILEA	\$ 11,253.61
Park Equipment	\$ 1,248.29

\$ 132,037.50

The Old Barn

Utilities	\$ 532.11
Building Maintenance /Repair	\$ 695.00
Waste Disposal Service	\$ -

\$ 1,227.11

Recreation Services

Salaries (Environmental Education)	\$ 132,061.29
Uniform	\$ 400.00
Cell Phone Allowance	\$ 600.00
Salaries (Animal Caretaker)	\$ 4,258.63
FICA	\$ 10,015.98
IPERS	\$ 10,928.72
Health Insurance - Admin	\$ 25,351.80
Annuity	\$ 4,400.00

\$ 188,016.42

Animal Feed	\$ 4,724.15
Recreational Supplies	\$ 5,849.89
Collections/ Displays	\$ 425.29
Publications/Notices	\$ 3,423.86
Tuition/Registration	\$ 1,427.00
Meals & Lodging	\$ 895.81

\$ 16,746.00

Total Cons Gen Basic & Gen Supp \$ 1,010,843.76

Attachment B – FY24 Conservation Reserve / Land Acquisition

Conservation Reserve (Land Acquisition)*	
Starting Balance on 7/1/2023	\$ 259,165.77
Revenue	
Camping Fees	\$ 28,939.00
Fire Wood	\$ 2,239.00
Program Fees	\$ 3,530.00
Canoe & Kayak Rentals	\$ 2,115.00
Other Recreation	\$ 5,018.73
Cons Share - Boat titles	\$ 1,095.00
Donations	\$ 5,902.00
Rent Saulsbury Lodge	\$ 7,735.00
Rent Learning Center Classroom	\$ 285.00
Rent Park Shelters	\$ 3,255.00
Rent Cabins at DLP	\$ 42,027.00
Sales/Fuel Tax Refund	\$ 821.00
State Grants	\$ 1,213.50
Total Revenue	\$ 104,175.23
Expenditures	
Capital Projects	\$ 67,508.39
Deep Lakes Park	\$ 16,869.50
Non-Capital Expenses	\$ 7,036.70
Total Expenditures	\$ 91,414.59
Ending Balance on 6/30/24	\$ 271,926.41



Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP)	
Starting Balance on 7/1/2023	\$ 160,328.26
Revenue	
REAP FY24 Per Capita	\$ 10,676.00
REAP FY24 Per County	\$ 7,776.00
Interest on Income	\$ 5,784.84
Total Income	\$ 24,236.84
Expenditures	
Animal Caretaker Salary	\$ 4,258.37
FICA	\$ 325.56
Ipers	\$ 401.88
REAP Capital Improvements	\$ 62,648.00
Total Expenses	\$ 67,633.81
Balance as of 6/30/2024	\$ 116,931.29



Equipment Reserve	
Budgeted	\$ 50,000.00
Budget Amendment (Increase)	\$ 11,909.00
Total Funding	\$ 61,909.00
Expenditures	
2023 Chevy 15 Passenger Van	\$ 32,519.00
2023 Chevy Traverse	\$ 13,500.00
2024 JD Mower	\$ 15,890.00
Total Expenses	\$ 61,909.00

**Iowa Code 350.6 states that "Upon request of the county conservation board, the board of supervisors shall establish a reserve for county conservation land acquisition and capital improvement projects. Money credited to the reserve shall remain in the reserve until expended for the projects upon warrants requisitioned by the county conservation board." This Conservation Reserve Account, also called "Land Acquisition" allows the gifts, contributions, and bequests of money, rent, licenses, fees, charges, and other revenues received by the county conservation board to be placed in this account to be carried over and used for land acquisition and capital improvements.*

Note: FY23 expenditures were reimbursed in FY24 and some FY24 expenditures may be reimbursed in FY25.