

IOWA'S COUNTY CONSERVATION SYSTEM DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2023

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LWCF & SCORP

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was passed into law in 1964 and is intended to “create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high-quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States.” On August 4, 2020, the Great American Outdoors Act fully and permanently funded the LWCF.

In short, this federal fund provides funds through grants to States and local governments to carry out these goals. One condition of the LWCF requires that State and local governments create, update, and submit a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan-(SCORP) and submit that plan to the National Park Service every five years.

County Conservation has long been a part of this successful program; CCBs are eligible to receive funds for grant projects and are an integral part of plan development, content, and updates. We work with the DNR and many other agencies to implement the best plan. CCBs and other government entities then use the SCORP to guide their plans, projects, and the development of outdoor recreation resources.

This most recent version of the Iowa SCORP is now available in a StoryMap format through ArcGIS. This allows the user to drill down to their community or region in maps that accompany the information. Under the outdoor funding tab, there are two interactive opportunities you want to take advantage of. The first is a photo collage highlighting a list of grant opportunities through many of Iowa's state agencies when you click on an image. The lists in each square are clickable and take you to the grant websites.

The plan is in draft; we are taking any comments until January 15th. There is still room for your local story, “The last map of the plan is where I hope to add more great projects. A way to sell some cool things that counties or communities have put on the ground that meet the SCORP Priorities. We will continue to add to this area of the plan and keep it current. So, I'd love to get more examples from locations with those cool things. It also doesn't necessarily have to be built projects either. With the priority for getting people active to help with health and wellness, there may be a great partnership that a CCB has with a local health provider or a great program a naturalist provides. We want to showcase those great things people do and wanted to have a way to do that in the plan.” Michelle Wilson IDNR.

Please submit stories, photos, links, comments, and suggestions to Michelle.Wilson@dnr.iowa.gov. A big thanks to Michelle and her team for coordinating this critical effort. [Click Here to View the SCORP DRAFT](#)

D A T E S

January 12th- 13th
REAP Congress
Des Moines.

January 18th
District 1 Meeting
Polk County

January 23rd-25th
Winterfest 2024 Hyatt
Regency Coralville, IA

March 13th County
Day at the Capitol

March 13th-15th
ISAC Spring
Conference

April 3rd-5th
IAN Council Bluffs



FINAL PUSH FOR WINTERFEST REGISTRATION

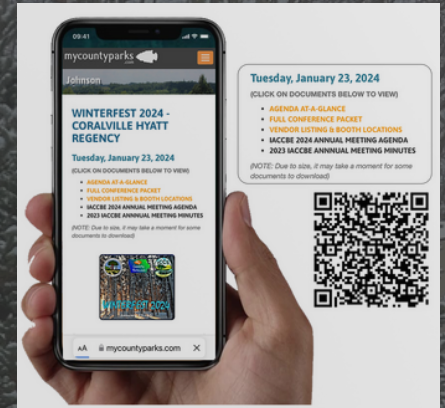


WINTERFEST 2024
January 23-25 - Coralville
mycountyparks.com



Winterfest 2024 is just around the corner and preparations are all but final. **Early Registration closes on Wednesday, January 3rd** and a \$25 will be charged per registration after that! **Final registration will be on January 11th.** With 323 employees already registered and Vendor space nearly full this is going to be another great year for attendance! **Get it done Today!!!**

Link: WINTERFEST-2024-EMPLOYEE-REGISTRATION.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESUME REVIEW

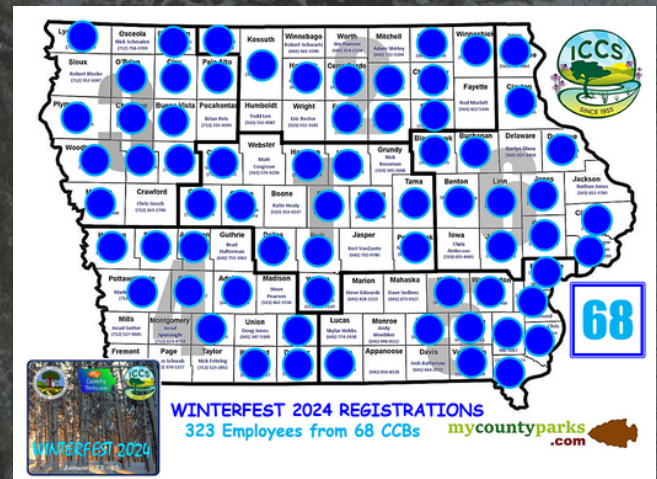


We are once again hosting a resume review session as part of this year's college session. We Need a few qualified volunteers to help the next generation. You will be needed for approx. ½ hour starting around 11:40 AM on Wednesday, January 24th – just before the luncheon. The Students

continually respond that this is a very valuable part of the colligate day experience for them. It is also a chance to meet and recruit applicants for seasonal positions.

If you have had some experience in this area please step up! Contact Adam if you are willing & interested as soon as possible via email.

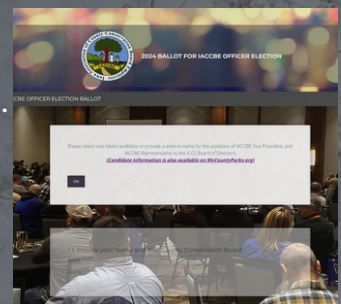
iaccb@mycountyparks.org



DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!

IACCBE Elections for the Vice President and the Employees Association Representative to the ICCS Board of Directors are open. This is an easy way for any CCB employee to participate or take time to learn more about IACCBE. Take a minute and give it a click or two! There have been a total of just 13 ballots cast so far...

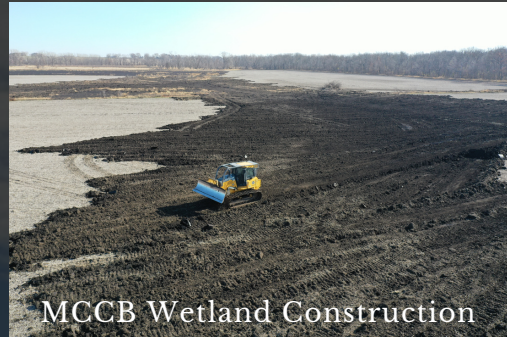
2024 IACCBE Ballot on Survey Monkey - The link to cast votes is HERE- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IACCBEBALLOT2024>



OUTSTANDING WINTER DISTRICT MEETINGS!



District I Meeting



MCCB Wetland Construction



District III Meeting



District V Meeting



Pincon Ridge Dam Project



District VI

Marshall County hosted District I on November 30th at the Grimes Farm and Conservation Center in Marshalltown. Programming focused on what's happening in Marshall County and did not disappoint. Emily Herring has recently taken over as Director, and she and the staff continue a tradition of success there. She updated attendees on everything from concerts in the park to a recent land acquisition. Then Ross Baxter (INHF) and Fish and Wildlife Private Land Coordinator Andrew DiAllesandro presented on a wetland restoration project, another story of multiple agencies collaborating to get high-quality, impactful projects done at the best price possible. Information on how to receive funding assistance for wetlands, seeds, and the sharing of resources was made available. A local food truck provided some amazing burritos, followed by a tour of the new wetlands.

District III met at the Pocahontas CCB Headquarters with 62 CCB staff in attendance! The meeting focused on essential updates from all attending counties. Host County Director Brian Reis talked about an upcoming project that will be the first of its kind in the state. It will involve pumping tile water into a PCCB wetland complex to add hydrology and improve water quality through wetland filtration simultaneously. In other more unfortunate news, timber theft continues in the PCCB area, but one perpetrator has been caught after felling a record-sized White Oak on public property. The district held its Fish Habitat scoring meeting after a great meal catered by PCCB staff.

District V met in Washington County on December 14th at beautiful Marr Park. District V had record attendance for this one and after County updates and the business meeting, Iowa White-tailed Deer Biologist Jace Elliot presented on EHD. The disease spread by a midge impacted the southeast area of the state. Though there was a significant loss of deer this year, no exceptional herd population management will be required. The history of the disease indicated that herds tend to recover quickly and build immunity over time. Another great in-house meal was prepared, and all CCB facilities at the park were open for tours and questions. Thanks to Washington CCB for hosting!

Finally, District VI held its bi-annual meeting at Pinicon Ridge Park in Linn County. Iowa DNR Biologist Scott Gritters started the meeting with an exciting presentation about mussels and, specifically, rare mussels found in the Wapsipinicon during a mussel blitz. This discovery led to additional funding for their dam mitigation project at the park. Deputy Director Daniel Gibbons gave an excellent presentation about the nearly 4-million-dollar dam removal that provided multiple public benefits, including safety, fish passage, and recreational challenges. Daniel did a great job of sharing the goals, the process, the funding, and, most importantly, the public relations communication and strategy. Attendees toured the Dam mitigation project after the business meeting and fish habitat scoring.

Our system hosted four great meetings that provided professional-level training, conducted important business, and offered critical networking opportunities as CCBs set their budgets and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Thanks to all the host counties for an excellent round of meetings!

MARK VAVROCH RETIRES FROM POWESHIEK CCB AFTER 36 YEARS OF SERVICE.



Vavroch was hired as a Park Ranger/Naturalist in 1987 and later became director in 1990. Vavroch recalls Diamond Lake was about the only park in the county and it was in desperate need of infrastructure upgrades. The park became a focal point of Vavroch's career where countless improvements took place over the years. From new restrooms, roads, playgrounds, shelter houses, boat docks, and ramps to campgrounds and hiking trails, Vavroch improved every aspect of the park and the lake. He also helped acquire and add another 360 acres to the park and built the Foster Center as the CCB headquarters and meeting space. Later a new shop and shop edition were added.



Diamond Lake was a premier fishery until 2010, when common carp invaded during flood conditions; one of Vavroch's last goals was to initiate a total lake restoration project. Beyond his accomplishments at Diamond Lake, Vavroch was able to complete 18 acquisitions, adding over 1,100 acres for public recreation in Poweshiek County. Vavroch said, "his favorite part of the job was the people he met and the partnerships that were formed." He was extremely thankful for the partnerships that made all the projects possible. Without them and strong community support, things would not have gotten done.

Vavroch was a critical leader on the ICCS Board of Directors for six years. Former CEO Tom Hazelton recalls, "Mark was always a calm voice of reason we could count on and helped guide us through some difficult times." Vavroch also served on the Winterfest committee and was active at all state and district functions. Vavroch has relocated to a house overlooking Lake Red Rock to enjoy his family and well-deserved retirement. Thanks Mark!

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DAN COHEN RETIRES FROM BUCHANNAN CCB ... CONTINUES CAREER WITH CONSERVATION WORK FREELANCE



After 38 years with Buchanan County Conservation Director Dan Cohen is stepping away. In that time, Cohen has certainly left his mark on our system; he has won numerous awards and been recognized throughout his career. Most recently Cohen was announced as the 2023 Iowa Association of Naturalists (IAN) and the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition (ICEC) Aldo Leopold Award winner for lifetime achievement in Environmental Education (EE) excellence and leadership.

Environmental Education was a focal point of Dan's career, he started as a naturalist and worked for 15 years in that role. Over the years, Cohen has led dozens of youth and adult-training wilderness trips, established a county-wide EE program, served on IAN executive committees, and served as chair of the Iowa Conservation Education Council. During his time as Director, Cohen's mission at BCCC was "Increasing our quality of life through programs of conservation and education." He is proud to have permanently protected and enhanced 18 local properties that are now open for public recreation. And is very proud of the great staff has been able to assemble and work with.



Cohen also served as President of the ICCS board of Director's Winterfest Committee, CCDA Legislative Committee, and various Natural resources Committees. Cohen was appointed by the Governor to develop the framework for what has become the Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund and spent four years fighting to get it amended into the State Constitution. Though the Trust remains unfunded 13 years later Cohen urges the next generation to "Keep your eyes on the prize and get involved in efforts to improve conservation and outdoor recreation at home and throughout Iowa - however you can. Show up and speak up. Lead or follow, but continually play a role." "Engaging with others in our field is important professionally and personally, as well as making strides for conservation, education, and recreation that benefit all Iowans. Continue to pursue your nature and outdoor recreation passions - be a genuine conservation champion."



Cohen has many amazing memories and enjoyed hearing conservation success stories like how wilderness trips and programs have helped others pursue nature, get off drugs, or pursue a career in conservation. He remembers hosting Teddy Roosevelt at the 2011 Fall conferences and, most of all, the amazing people in our system.

Cohen has been a writer and freelance contractor during his career for work focused on writing, photography, advocacy, interpretive planning, and water trail reconnaissance, Cohen plans to continue this work and can be contacted at 319-238-1638; dwcohen81@gmail.com. Congratulations and thank you, Dan!

KATIE HAMMOND STEPS UP TO LEAD MUSCATINE CCB

Hammond spent 12 years as a Naturalist in Louisa County before becoming their Director for the past 12. After 24 years in Louisa County she has decided to make the bittersweet move and accept the Executive Director position in Muscatine County. Hammond looks forward to the challenge of running a larger County and building new relationships and connections. She says the community has been quick to welcome her and has already demonstrated strong support for conservation and the future of their program. Hammond says that she is excited to get to work. Deep Lakes Park area will be one of her first large projects. Congrats Katie!



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ICCS LAND SURVEY REMINDER

A vital survey has landed in 99 inboxes to help ICCS prepare for the upcoming legislative session. We want to be able to share accurate data about County Conservation land acquisition and management practices with our legislature.

We also want to use the data to assemble our industry's best practices. Thank you for your participation, and to those 65 CCBs who have already responded!

PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO ANSWER BY FRIDAY, JANUARY 5TH.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Iowa County - Executive Director
2. Hardin County - Interpretive Park Technician
3. Woodbury County - PT Volunteer Coordinator
4. Polk County - Park Officer- ILEA Cert Required
5. Wapello County - Conservation Technician
6. Woodbury County - Resource Technician
7. Wapello County - Museum Staff

SEASONAL POSITIONS ON WEBSITE!!

<https://www.mycountyparks.com/Jobs/Default.aspx>