

IOWA'S COUNTY CONSERVATION SYSTEM OCTOBER

NEWSLETTER 2023

VOLUME 65. ISSUE 4.

FALL, A TIME TO GROW?

DATES

November 15th ICCS
Board of Directors
Meeting, Des Moines

November 16th-
17th Iowa Nature
Summit
Drake University

December 14th
District V Meeting
Washington
County

December 20th
District VI Meeting
Linn County

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

We need to grow and we can't wait for spring. One thing that surfaced immediately from this year's e-commerce summit was the urgent need for a credit card/digital payment system to be available through mycountyparks.com for all campsites, not just reservable campsites. Park Rangers and field staff have long imagined the day when they no longer had to constantly count through stacks of cash, checks, and pennies to verify registrations every day, or track down and inform campers that their envelope was somehow five dollars short. Admin staff would probably enjoy not having to do the recount and not worrying about chasing down hot checks! Finally, in today's world, we know that customers just want to use their card or phone app to register and pay as quickly and painlessly as possible. We must quickly adapt or risk losing customers.

Thus the mycountyparks.com digital payment system is being developed as quickly as possible to provide customers and our counties with an adaptable easy-to-use payment system that will allow digital registration at all campsites. **Yes, that includes first-come, first-serve sites!** This system will work through a QR code and will allow users to register and pay for their site immediately through mycountyparks.com. The site will then notify staff through their calendar immediately, similar to the current reservation system.

There are some things to work through and figure out going forward. We must determine the best process, develop the functionality, and then deploy this feature. We have given this project top priority with the goal of making this available for the upcoming 2024 camping season! We ask for your patience as we work through this project, we promise to keep you informed as things progress. This is another critical evolution for our industry, and we believe it will help lead us to a more sustainable path of growth moving forward!



First Ever New Director training Hosted by Marion CCB



The first ever training opportunity received very positive reviews and will likely become another staple in our statewide training network. The CCDA committee hopes to continue to attract a diverse group of interested attendees from existing to aspiring Directors. We expect this event will continue to grow and improve each year to provide the best training possible. We look forward to this event again next year!

Nine Directors from across the state met in Marion County in early October to develop their leadership skills and learn more about the ins and outs of the Director position.

The County Conservation Director's Association, Bolton and Menk, and ICCS partnered to hire Professional Leadership coach Alan Frier who took the attendees through DICS self-assessment training and applied that training to leading a team based on their strengths.

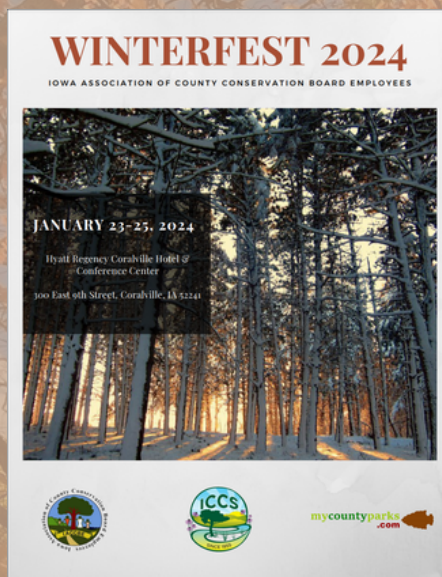
They also learned from ISAC Legal Council Kristi Harshbager about Board management, Chapter 350 and more. Other topics included working with your Board of Supervisors, legislative engagement, media management, along with project management and development.



ICCS Email Scoop DECEMBER 1st.

It has become evident that many counties are lagging in their efforts to keep staff and board member emails up to date. We kindly ask that you make an effort to go in to mycountyparks and update current staff and members and please remove any old address that are no longer serving or employed. We thank you in advance for assisting in this effort to make sure all our employees and board members are connected to our Statewide network. Again, please complete these updates before December 1st. Thank You!

Winterfest 2024 Registration Available for Employees, Sponsors, and Vendors



Time to sign up and register for Winterfest 2024, the premier training opportunity for Iowa's County Conservation Employees! Once again, the Winterfest Committee has put together a great line-up of over 30 presenters with something for everyone. Join us to learn, network, and expand your horizons.

Book your rooms for this year's event at the Hyatt Regency Coralville Hotel & Conference Center on January 23-25, 2024. Early Bird registration closes on January 4th, 2024, so click the link below and get the best deal on the best training available. The Full packet and all Winterfest information can be found here: The Full packet and all Winterfest information can be found here: <https://www.mycountyparks.org/conferences.html>

Preferred vendors and Sponsors can complete their 2024 online membership and find sponsorship opportunities **CLICK: <https://www.mycountyparks.com/Org-Event/80/WIINTERFEST-2024-VENDOR-REGISTRATION.aspx>** We have done our best to streamline this process for you all and truly appreciate your partnership and continued support! Please Contact Adam Shirley Iaccb@mycountyparks.org with any questions, many Thanks!

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ICCS New Employee's School

New Employee School Welcomes 34 Employees! This year, 34 new employees joined us for a basic understanding of our organization, as well as an introduction to our closest partners. The school began with an informative presentation by Michelle Wilson, who is the DNR County Conservation liaison. She gave an overview of the DNR's function and how it collaborates with our industry through grants and other programs like REAP. Wilson also shared how we partner with DNR to develop statewide plans like the State Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Next up, Abby Tapestra from the Iowa Natural Heritage foundation discussed the organization's role and how we can partner with them to complete projects. Lora Friest from Travel Iowa then reiterated the importance of tourism and marketing, highlighting that CCBs provide the state's number one tourist attraction, which is outdoor recreation. Attendees also learned about IPERS and how to save for retirement, followed by a session on County Conservation 101. It was a great experience for all, thanks again to all our presenters!!!



MYCOUNTYPARKS.com E-Commerce Summit Boasts Record Attendance

This year's ecommerce summit was engaging, informative, and interactive. Hazelton updated the group on all the new goings on with the improvements to the site as well as a tour of the new prototype! This was followed up by Informatics CEO John Osako who gave a much anticipated and exciting update about the new website, its functionality, and what the future holds. He also spoke in depth about the need for quality visual media, gave tips, advice, and examples on how to stay up to date and market what we do. Thanks John, it was great having you there!

A big thanks to the presenters who shared valuable experience and information from within our system! Laura Car of Hardin County talked about their service animal policy, Ryan Schmidt from Kossuth CCB talked about how they are using QR codes in their parks to register campers. The group then broke out into Q&A along with a great discussion about future opportunities for a digital campground checkout and other point of sale opportunities. It was great having such a large group representing both large and small counties along with field and office staff to really flush out ideas and practical improvements. Information from the summit is available here:

<https://www.mycountyparks.org/conferences.html>

If your County isn't involved with e-commerce yet but is interested or planning to be, there will be another mycountyparks.com 101 zoom opportunity on November 8th registration is open through the 7th here:

<https://www.mycountyparks.com/Org-Event/76/MCP-com-101-FALL-BASIC-TRAINING.aspx>

Do You Have A Need For Seed?



Join the Iowa DNR – CCB Prairie Seed Cooperative.

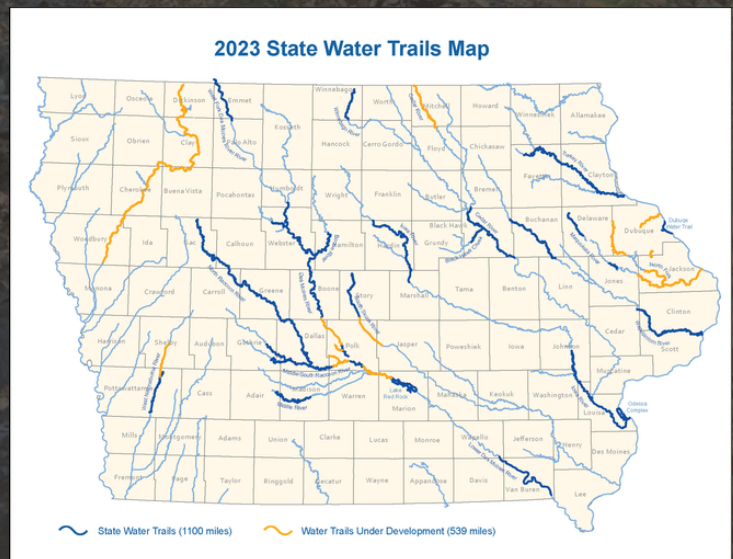
How does the Prairie Seed Coop work? Iowa DNR Prairie Resource Unit will provide materials to begin a plot for 1-5 species of prairie forbs, knowledge on how to get started, and seed cleaning for the project. The coop partner provides labor to plant, weed, and harvest the seed produced in the plot. In return for the input of sweat equity, the coop partner will receive a diverse seed mix in return. Plots can be small or large, managed with volunteers, seasonal staff or full-time employees, and species that are propagated can be selected from our list of species.

Do you have questions about the coop or have interest in getting started? Give William a call to discuss the details 515-543-8319(office), 515-689-5704(cell), or william.johnson@dnr.iowa.gov He is looking forward to hearing from some new partners!



Iowa DNR Water Trails Grants Available

There are many state designated water trails and water trails under development that run through Iowa's 99 counties--see attached map. And, the CCBs are all eligible to apply for water trail enhancement grants for water accesses or other improvements, such as amenities at access sites, etc. The grant application provides further information about eligibility. We have a grant due on December 5 this year--\$500,000 is available statewide. In addition, we have an application for water trail planning. We select one project per year from these applications via a scoring committee. The DNR Rivers Program funds all the planning pieces, but the project partners do need to be engaged in that process, but it comes absolutely free. The plan will lead to state designation. The process typically takes 18-24 months to complete. The pre-qualification section is due Dec 5th, as well. The final application is due in March 2024. Link Below



https://www.iowadnr.gov/things-to-do/canoeing-kayaking_

CCPOA Meets for 2024 Fall Workshop.

The County Conservation Police Officer's Association held their fall workshop at Camp Dodge on October 10th-12th where they spent a day on the range qualifying, followed by a day and a half of re-certification courses, and presentations followed by their annual business meeting. They also took time to welcome over a dozen new CCPOA members to their ranks with a well put together orientation program.

The County Conservation Police Officers Association met at Camp Dodge this month to check off their remaining annual qualifications to maintain their certifications. I would like to thank the leadership committee for the invite, I enjoyed getting to know more about this impressive organization first hand!



Art, Bikes, & Brew for District II

Cerro Gordo County hosted an awesome district two meeting last week with over 50 in attendance! Presentations covered their Art in the Parks initiative which included inside and outside additions to the Lime Creek Nature Center. We also heard from Director Josh Brant and the Mason City Administrator about their partnership to bring Iowa's first major Bike Park to Mason City. It was fascinating to see the goals of the two organizations aligned around outdoor recreation and tourism. Then after diving into the history of Lime Creek with Assistant Professor Kevin Mason of Waldorf College, attendees were treated to a tour of the ruins of the historical Spring Brewery, originally built in 1873. Then Matt Curtis of Waynes Ski and Cycle provided information and demonstrations on E-bikes. Another great meeting with lunch provided by CCCB staff at no charge, Thank you!

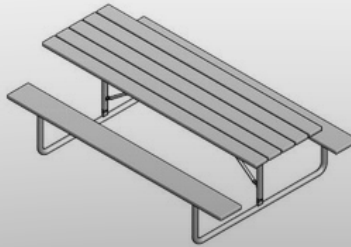


Outdoor Furniture

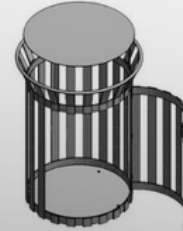
Back by Popular Demand!



Park Benches



Picnic Tables



Trash Receptacles

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Purchases from Iowa Prison Industries support our valuable work training programs, allowing Iowa's incarcerated men and women the opportunity for Building Brighter Futures.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Delaware County - Executive Director
2. Hamilton County - Park Ranger
3. Wapello County - Museum Staff
4. O'Brien County - Park Ranger
5. Tama County - Conservation Director
6. Jefferson County - Naturalist
7. Polk County - Equestrian Assistant
8. Hardin County - Natural Resource Tech
9. Polk County - Cabin Cleaner
10. Polk County - Conservation Laborer

SEASONAL POSITIONS ON WEBSITE!!

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

FY24 PRELIMINARY SALARY SURVEYS NOW AVAILABLE!

A quick thanks to the 93 Counties that complete this year's salary survey! This tool allows us to provide useful financials including salary, and benefit information for counties to use during their budget discussions. Please note that though the tabulation of averages by position and median salary information is up to date. The spreadsheet containing revenue and other financials will not be fully up to date until we receive the REAP reports back from the DNR. When we have all that information we will get it entered and notify you as soon as possible. Thank you for your participation!