

IOWA'S COUNTY
CONSERVATION SYSTEM
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NEWSLETTER 2025

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Nature Summit 2025

D A T E S

December 1st
District V Meeting
Lee County

December 3rd
ICCS Board
Meeting

December 10th
District III Meeting
Sioux County

December 11th
District IV Meeting
Madison County

December 17th
District VI Meeting
Black Hawk County

January 27th-29th
Winerfest 2026
Hyatt Regency
Coralville, IA

The 2025 Iowa Nature Summit didn't just bring conservation leaders and community partners together—it made headlines across Iowa for spotlighting some of the state's most pressing natural resource challenges. Held November 19–20 at Drake University, the Summit elevated statewide conversations around water quality, land use, and the growing public-health impacts linked to environmental conditions.

Media coverage zeroed in on several key themes raised during the event, especially the mounting evidence connecting nitrate pollution and chemical exposure to adverse health outcomes. These discussions brought new visibility to issues long understood in conservation circles but increasingly gaining traction with the broader public.

While the Summit drew attention for its candid look at Iowa's environmental realities, it also highlighted solutions. Breakout sessions explored everything from conservation finance and easements to nature-based education and community-driven water monitoring—providing practical tools that local governments and organizations can put to use immediately.

A legislative breakfast added further momentum by bringing lawmakers into the conversation ahead of the 2026 session, with a shared recognition that water quality and outdoor recreation funding will remain major priorities.

The overall message resonating through both the Summit and its statewide media coverage was clear: Iowa's natural resources are at a pivotal moment, and coordinated action is needed now! Participants left with renewed energy—and with the public spotlight firmly on these issues, the Summit helped amplify the urgency for meaningful progress in the year ahead.



WINTERFEST 2026

January 27–29, 2026 • Hyatt Regency Coralville

Registration is now open for Iowa's premier training event for County Conservation professionals! Winterfest continues to grow each year, bringing together more than 500 staff from across the state for three days of hands-on learning, networking, and professional development.

Why Attend Winterfest?

Over 30+ educational sessions spanning natural resources, law enforcement, environmental education, outreach, trails, technology, and more.

Two outstanding keynote speakers: Chris Lee, Organizational Ecologist & Podcast Co-Host, and Billy Molls, Alaskan guide and storyteller.

Access to pre-conference workshops, technical skills sessions, and learning. A supportive, collaborative environment designed to strengthen Iowa's County Conservation System.

Calling All Sponsors & Exhibitors

Winterfest would not be possible without the generous support of our partners. Exhibitors and sponsors help keep costs low, enhance attendee experiences, and promote innovative products and services to Iowa's conservation community. Showcase your brand, connect with more than 500 professionals, and support Iowa's largest conservation training event.

For sponsorship or exhibitor information, contact IACCBE through mycountyparks.com.

Register Today

Early Bird Registration: \$130 through January 2

Regular Registration Deadline: January 10

Register at mycountyparks.com

A block of rooms is available at the Hyatt Regency for \$110/night.

Book by January 5 to secure the conference rate.

[Register today at MyCountyParks.com](http://MyCountyParks.com)

IACCBE Vice President Candidate-Vote Now!



My name is Madison Beenken; I am the 2026 IACCBE Vice President Candidate. I graduated in 2020 from South Dakota State University with a B.S. in Conservation Planning and Park Management, specializing in Park Administration and Management. I have been employed by Kossuth County since January 2023, serving as the Maintenance Technician. Prior to gaining full-time employment with Kossuth County Conservation, I worked for the USDA in Sioux County and had various seasonal years with IADNR and county conservation. My love for recreation and natural resources developed when I was young, and I continue to show my passion through my various

roles. I was nominated to serve as District 2 secretary in early 2025 and, at our summer meeting, was nominated to serve as District Vice President. Since Spring 2025, I have served on the IACCBE Winterfest board and have learned a lot about how the conference comes together. I am happy to lend a helping hand wherever it is needed and enjoy learning new things every day! VOTE FOR MADISON HERE!

District I Meeting

District I members gathered in Calhoun County on November 20 for a meeting featuring local project updates, informative presentations, and a chance to see several improvements firsthand.

Calhoun County Conservation shared significant progress across multiple sites. Recent work includes extensive prairie plantings, new full hook-up campsites and shower house updates at both University 40 and Featherstone Memorial Park, as well as major renovations to the nature center and office. These upgrades created

new exhibit space, a classroom and meeting room addition, and future plans for an outdoor classroom on newly acquired land. Roos Pond also saw habitat improvements, including a spawning bed, fish structure additions, and a repurposed bridge.

Presentations added to the day's discussions. IDALS staff outlined the nutrient reduction wetland projects taking shape across the Des Moines Lobe and explained several wetland types being used in agricultural landscapes. Attendees also enjoyed a local history program on Twin Lakes, covering everything from archaeological roots to the region's role in Iowa's early state park system. The meeting wrapped up with a guided tour of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, offering a behind-the-scenes look at the craftsmanship behind world-class pipe organs. Thanks To Director Curtis Vanderheiden and the CCCB Staff for hosting!



MyCountyParks.com – December BYTES Preview!

Though it appears “quiet on the surface,” there’s lots-a-happening in the background with our MyCountyParks.com Website! You can anticipate a “fresh” edition of the BYTES Newsletter to your inboxes in mid-December with information on the following topics:

- A recent survey (November 18th) was sent to ALL 53 E-Commerce CCBs to provide information about their Merchant Account Providers – to date, we have heard from only 12 of these 53. The information gathered will be shared with all E-Commerce CCBs, so please submit your information ASAP – the deadline is **December 5th!**
- We will be meeting with our developer (Informatics) & some CCBs representatives to discuss the April 2026 and 2027 deadlines for compliance with ADA.gov’s Website Content and Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) – which will impact all locations that CCBs have a website presence. This is real, and will impact each of you!
- NEW CCBs to E-Commerce – we are currently working with Audubon and Chickasaw CCBs to position them for early 2026 launches into online reservations with MCP.com. We welcome them to our collective online arena and will share with you their current status!
- KOSSUTH CCB utilizes Google Maps for a “Live” experience by park visitors utilizing trails!
- FACILITY RESERVATION CALENDAR Improvements – we are nearing completion of several months of testing by ICCS and several CCBs of adjustments to the calendars to allow for booking parameters to be determined by EACH CCB. This means that the current restriction of ONE YEAR for Campsites, and TWO YEARS for all other facilities, will become a thing of the past – stay tuned.
- EVENT REGISTRATION Improvements – Similar to above, we are currently in “test mode” on improvements to event registrations with a new “locking mechanism” that will “lock” an open slot for an event for a certain time – not allowing someone else to “book” that slot out from underneath them. Updates will be provided.
- OCTOBER E-COMMERCE SUMMIT RE-CAP – It was great to see 119 of you from 54 CCBs at the 11th annual rendition of this event on October 22nd! We plan to revisit the highlights and information-sharing from this historic 2025 gathering!
- MCP.com BASIC TRAINING – Coming in January on ZOOM!
- 510 WEBSITE “ADMINS” on MCP.com?? – Which ones of you are “expired”??
- GOOGLE ANALYTICS ON MCP.com FOR YOUR CCB – How to “order” your personalized edition! ALL NEWSLETTERS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

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2026 LWCF Application Window Opens December 1

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has announced that the 2026 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application will open December 1, 2025, through the DNR's SlideRoom Portal. Cities and counties across Iowa can apply for up to \$250,000 per project, with a required 1:1 match for eligible outdoor recreation projects. The application period will close at 11:59 p.m. on March 6, 2026.

Applicants are encouraged to reach out with questions or for guidance as they begin planning. Please feel free to share this announcement broadly with partners and stakeholders who may be interested. LWCF INFORMATION

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Plymouth County- Park Ranger
2. Polk County- Equestrian Program Lead Asst.

+ SEASONAL POSITIONS ON WEBSITE!!

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