

Winter-Spring 2007 Issue

Pathways to Nature

Newsletter of the Webster County Conservation Board

From the Director's Desk

"Paying for What's Important"

Matt Cosgrove, Director

When you ask any community if they want great parks, scenic trails, tranquil wilderness areas, and excellent water quality, the answer is always, "Of course"! This seems like an easy problem to solve. Unfortunately in Iowa, when it comes time to fund conservation and recreation initiatives seem to get pushed to the bottom of the pile. Iowa is 49th out of the 50 states in the percentage of public land for outdoor recreation. Our water quality is the poorest in the nation and Iowa only spends about 1% of our annual state budget on natural resources. With higher priorities, such as health care, education, and transportation, our natural resources are often the last to be funded.

The 2005-06 Legislature has realized the poor condition of our natural resources and the economic and social impact this will have on our state. They have taken a very important step in addressing the problem by establishing an advisory committee to explore a **sustainable** funding source for our natural resources. The advisory committee is made up of a diverse group of people representing a variety of interests. This group was given the task of exploring ways to establish a **sustainable** source of income to fund projects that include wildlife, water quality, parks, and trails. The group has a deadline in January 2007 to look at successful programs in other states, gather public input, and draft recommendations for our legislators to review. My hope is the legislature will review these recommendations, seek public input, and develop a **sustainable** funding source that will protect and enhance our natural resources for many years to come.

With the recent elections behind us and many new faces preparing for their positions in political offices, now is the perfect time to visit with your local and regional leaders to let them know the value of our natural resources and the important role they play in Iowa's future. As the Iowa economy grows and we take the lead in the global energy market, it's important that our natural resources share in this success and ensure that we have a great place to live and raise families.

The political atmosphere is changing and we are beginning to put a value on recreational opportunities and the important role they play in recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce. Local signs of this change include: the City of Fort Dodge Recreational Study and Needs Assessment, the riverfront revitalization, the formation of the Webster County Development Trails Task Force, and the organization of the *Friends of Webster County Conservation*. Many good things are happening around us. I would encourage you to be a part of these good things and get involved through boards, committees, and public input sessions.

It's time we all ask ourselves, "Are we willing to pay for what's important?"

*Additional information about sustainable funding for our natural resources
can be found at www.iowadnr.com*

Board Member changes

Another long-standing board member has recently retired from the Webster County Conservation Board. Orville O'Connell served on the board for 23 years. Orville's dedication to conservation and interest in the environment is commendable, and his commitment to the board's mission is much appreciated. The Webster County Conservation staff and remaining board members would like to thank Orville for his time devoted to natural resources and environmental education.

Latest changes to the board have been the appointment of Jim Eslick, Kirk Seltz, and most recently, Jerry Beck. We welcome these new members and hope their experience is gratifying. Feel free to encourage and support them in their conservation decision-making.

Environmental Education Expansion

Hello, my name is Erin Meehan. I am the new naturalist aid for Webster County Conservation & the Iowa DNR. I graduated from Fort Dodge Senior High, attended ICCB, and finally graduated from the University of Dubuque with a B.S. degree in Environmental Science.

My responsibilities within Webster County are to carry out environmental education programs at Kennedy Park, Dolliver Park, and Brushy Creek SRA through campground programs and general year-round public programs. Implementing school programs for both in-class and outdoor classrooms is one of my tasks. I will also be designing and developing informational displays, brochures, trail guides and other promotional materials.

This career has opened new areas in self-achievement and personal abilities. Since starting I have been involved with school programs, field trips, public programs, and park upkeep. This position is a pilot for the state of Iowa to pave the way for future sharing opportunities between agencies. I would like to thank all for making this position possible and giving me this opportunity.

New Vegetation Specialist

My name is Cody Peterson and I am the Vegetation Technician for Webster County. I was hired last July to help carry out the county's IRVM program. I attended Pocahontas Area High School and went on to attend college at Central Lakes in Brainerd, Minnesota. I then transferred to Stevens Point, Wisconsin where I received my bachelor's degree in natural resource management with minors in soil science and environmental law enforcement.

My position deals mostly with keeping the roadsides in Webster County clean of invasive plants and trying to get native vegetation to thrive where they once were found. I also work with farmers in seeding their CRP areas and help the rest of the park staff with maintaining Kennedy Park. I really enjoy my job here and get to work with some great people.

Moving On.....

We recently bid farewell to a friend and co-worker, Andy Hockenson, as he took a job as park ranger for the Boone County Conservation Board. Andy had been with us since 2004 and many of you got to know him through the various tasks he carried out: managing the Kennedy Park campground, assisting with school groups and public programs like the Maple Syrup Festival, and Ice Fishing, Plant Some Shade, etc. We wish him well in new career and future goals. We will miss his hard work, pleasant smile, and warm personality. It won't be the same without him here.

Partners in Conservation

Friends of Webster County Conservation

Mission Statement

The mission of the Friends of Webster County Conservation is to provide awareness, appreciation, and the preservation of Webster County's natural resources for future generations.

Board of Directors

TJ Lynn – Chairperson
Brad Luke – Vice-chair
Deanna Rohrer – Secretary
Jerry Beck – Treasurer

Membership Levels

Individual	\$15.00
Family	\$25.00
Business	\$250.00

Members receive special notice of upcoming events, discounts on program fees, an annual event for members, a network with like-minded conservationists, a link to the natural environment, & an opportunity to provide valuable input for future developments.

If interested in becoming a Friend, please contact Karen at 576-4258.

Friend of the Year for 2006

This year, the Friends of Webster County decided to give an award to a member who went above and beyond the call of "conservation" duty. The board decided that Steve Johanson was most deserving of the "Friend of the Year" award, given for outstanding contributions in environmental education, conservation awareness, land stewardship, and outdoor recreation. For years Steve has been storing the corn for the Trumpeter Swan program in Webster County. Thanks to his hard work, the fish cleaning station at Kennedy Park became a reality. He orchestrated a great deal on an aluminum dock for the summer boat rentals. He located a corn hopper for the future corn burner. He and his partner, Brian Fischel, co-owners of Ribs 'n More, have been the makers of the free pancakes at the Maple Syrup Festival held each spring AND they donated the delicious meal they catered for the Friends banquet this past Nov. Thanks so much to both of you. And congratulations, Steve, for all your devotion to conservation.



Steve Johanson
2006

"Friend of the Year Award"
Presented by the
Friends of Webster County Conservation

IRVM Shed

The Webster County Conservation Board (WCCB) has recently acquired a new building for their Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) program. This building is a Heritage Building System and was donated by *The Iowa Sportsman Magazine*, a division of Heartland Communications. Russ's Construction erected the building and the electrical work was completed by Gross Electric Inc. The board also received an \$11,500 grant from the *Living Roadway Trust Fund* through the Department of Transportation to help fund the project.

This building has been a 10-year plan in the making. WCCB was in need of a facility to store prairie grass seed, chemicals and their roadside equipment. This building will have an air-conditioned room for seed storage, which will allow for longer seed viability. The chemical room will be heated to allow for year-round storage and the main part of the shed which is 40' X 75' will provide storage for the equipment.

Thank you *Iowa Sportsman* and Heartland Communications for your generous donation!!

Public EE Programs

Winter–Spring 2007

Webster County Conservation

For more information, contact Karen at 576-4258 or khansen@webstercountyia.org

Nest Box Building

**Mon., Feb. 5
6:00 pm**

**Kennedy Park
Cost listed below**



Building nest boxes for our wild birds and mammals is a fun and memorable pastime shared with family. Due to habitat loss, nest boxes are important. Call / e-mail your choice of boxes by Jan. 31:

Wren, Bluebird, Chickadee \$7;

Bat, Screech or Saw whet Owl, Kestrel \$13

Robin, Barn swallow \$10

Flicker \$16

Ice Fishing

**Sat., Feb. 10
9am**



**Kennedy Park's Heun Shelter
Free**

Learn about safety on ice and how to enjoy one of Iowa's winter sports. Come and catch a nibble.

Cross-Country Skiing & Snowshoeing

Rental Info.: The public may rent the skis & snowshoes on weekends upon availability. Equipment may be picked up no later than 4:00 pm on Friday and returned no later than 4:00 pm the following Monday. Ski packages and snowshoes rent for \$10 per adult, and kids are FREE. Refunded deposit of \$100 per set.



Hunter Safety Class

**Mon., Feb. 26, Tues., 27, Thurs., March 1
5:30-9:00pm**

For future hunters age 12 & up. Register at Keith's 4414 or stop in at 1408 N. 17th St. Class is re-



**Kennedy Park's Heun shelter
Free**

Outdoors in Fort Dodge. Call 576- quired if born after July 1, 1972.

Cougar Program—call for more info.

Wed., March 7 7:00pm

Briggs Woods headquarters

Free

Learn more about these elusive felines that once roamed the hills and valleys of Iowa.

Whitetail Rack Measuring

**Sun., March 11
1-3pm**

ICCC — Career Education Bldg.

Scoring is FREE (Sports Show fee I— \$4 adults & \$2 children)

Free deer rack scoring during the sports show at ICCC. Willie Suchy, DNR's deer biologist will plan to present the status of Iowa's deer population.

Sports Show

Sat., March 10

9am-6pm

ICCC — Career Education Bldg.

Sun., March 11

11am-4pm

\$4 adults; \$2 children; Free ages 6 & under

Come and see Iowa pro angler Bob Jensen, exhibition shooter Tom Knapp, and pro walleye champ Ted Takasaki. Outdoor / conservation groups will have tables set up with info. and prizes.

Maple Syrup Festival

Sat., March 17
1:00 pm

Kennedy Park's Heun Shelter
Free



Enjoy the sweet, simmering smell and taste of homemade maple syrup. Bring the family to learn about the uses of sap long ago, see the tapping of trees, watch sap cooking into syrup, and finally taste it! Good hands-on fun and a tasty maple syrup treat for everyone.

Bird Nest Monitoring

Sat., March 31
10:00am-4:00pm

Kennedy Park's Heun Shelter
\$ 7.00 (for lunch)

Sponsored by the DNR Wildlife Diversity Program, this workshop is for the avid nature enthusiast who wants to be involved in wildlife surveys for years. Call Karen to register for this workshop.

Earth Day Cache In -Trash Out

Sat., April 21
9:00 am—4:00pm

Brushy Creek SRA—meet at the south day use area

Free



Learn how to geo-cache (find a prize hidden in nature using GPS units) and take out the trash as you go. Wear old clothes & gloves. Bring a GPS unit or some will be available on loan from us. Potluck will follow at 5:00pm. For equestrians (if it's not too muddy) and hikers. Families welcome.

Wind Turbine Program — *TBA. Call for more information.*

Sat., April 28 (tentative)

at Briggs Woods in Webster City

(Cut & Clip)

Conservation Calender



Mon., Feb. 5—Nest Box Building Workshop — Kennedy Park; **6:00 pm**

Sat., Feb 10—Ice Fishing Clinic — Badger Lake, Kennedy Park; **9:00am**

Feb. 26, 27, March 1—Hunter Safety—Kennedy Park Heun Shelter; **5:30-9:00pm**

Wed., March 7—Cougar Program—Briggs Woods headquarters; **7:00pm**

Sat., March 10—Sports Show — Iowa Central, Career Ed. Bldg; **9:00am-6:00pm**

Sun., March 11—Sports Show — Iowa Central, Career Ed. Bldg; **11:00am-4:00pm**

Sun., March 11—Deer rack measuring — Iowa Central, Career Ed. Bldg; **1:00-3:00pm**

Sat., March 17—Maple Syrup Festival — Kennedy Park; **1:00 pm**

Sat., March 31—Bird Nest Monitoring — Kennedy Park; **10:00am-4:00pm \$7**

Sat., April 21—Earth Day Cache In-Trash Out — Brushy Creek; **9:00am—4:00pm**

Sat., April 28—Wind Turbine program — Briggs Woods, Webster City; **3:00-6:00pm**

Sat., May 5—Fishing Derby — Brushy Creek; **9:00am-Noon**

Sat., May 5—Duane Bills Family Fishing Derby at Badger Lake; **1:00- 4:00pm**

May 4-6—Free Camping Weekend — State Parks only!!! (NOT Kennedy Pk)

Board meetings—2nd Tues. of each month —Kennedy Park Rec. Ctr.; **7:00pm**

WCCB News—Natural areas update

Miller Marsh Grows

The Webster County Conservation Board (WCCB), in partnership with the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Webster County Soil and Water Conservation District, is working to expand Miller Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Webster County. Miller Marsh is a 38-acre wildlife area that was purchased by Webster County Conservation in 2003 through the Wetland Reserve Program and named after past Conservation Director, Charlie Miller. It is located in northeast Webster County, five miles east of Badger and a mile and a half northwest of Vincent.

The Department of Transportation has purchased 146.5 acres of adjacent property from three landowners as a wetland mitigation project for the construction of Highway 20.

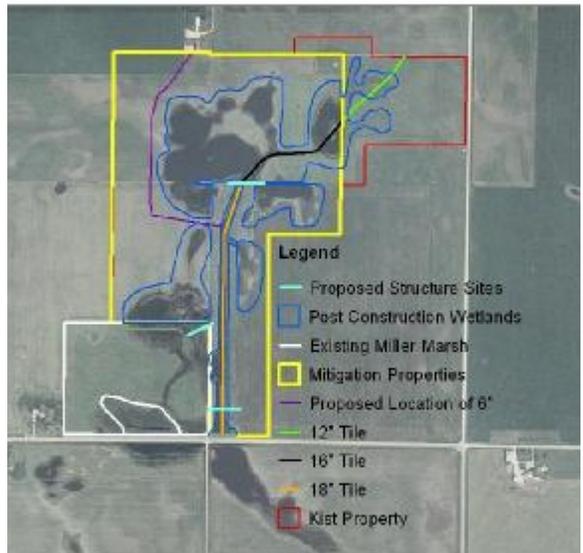
The Conservation Board has signed an agreement with the DOT that requires the Board to reconstruct the wetland and manage the site if the DOT acquires the property in the name of Webster County. The board is also working with a separate landowner to purchase an additional 31.3 acres to provide another access to the property. The completed project would be approximately 215.8 acres of wildlife habitat!!

WCCB and the NRCS have developed a reconstruction plan that will: 1.) close one of the two remaining ag. drainage wells in Webster County, 2.) install three water control structures to maintain several wetlands at a variety of depths, 3.) create excellent nesting and winter habitat for upland birds and migrating waterfowl, and 4.) provide a great opportunity for public hunting.

The Conservation Board has applied for a Habitat Stamp Grant to assist with the funding of this project. The board has already received significant donations, but is still in need of additional dollars to make this plan a reality. If you would like to help enhance water quality, improve wildlife habitat, and provide a great place for public recreation please contact the Conservation Office. **TO BE CONTINUED.....**

A HUGE THANK YOU TO...

The Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Webster Co. Soil & Water District, Webster Co. Pheasants Forever, Whitetails Unlimited, and the landowners that made this possible!!!



Family Cabin & Boat Rental

Blessed with buildings.....The Iowa Central Carpentry program under the direction of Bill McAnally built 2 different cabins recently and donated them to WCCB. The larger family cabin rests near the lakeshore of Badger Lake in the campground at Kennedy Park. When the interior work is completed, it will sleep 6 people, have electricity and possibly an outside water hydrant. Rental fee is \$40 for Friday & Saturday (2 night minimum required); and \$35 for Sunday-Thursday (1 night minimum required). Deposit of \$100 required. Rental is planned to start sometime this summer. The other smaller donated cabin will be used as a concessions building for paddleboats and miscellaneous supplies. Watch for scheduled rental hours this summer.



Thank you Iowa Central Carpentry for your valuable donation to outdoor recreation in Webster County!



Conservation Concerns

Firewood Alert

Stop the movement of

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and other exotic pests

Exotic pests like the EBA are starting to become a major threat to Iowa's forest-land. The **Emerald Ash Borer** aggressively attacks ash trees, killing even healthy trees in one to three years.



Image courtesy Howard Russell.



Ash tree leaf

Emerald Ash Borer can become established in an area when infested firewood is transported into a new area. Since the infestation is under the bark you usually cannot tell if you're bringing these unwanted "hitchhiker" into a new area. To stop the spread please do the following:

- Use local wood sources
- Do not bring firewood from home
- If you bring firewood from home, BURN IT IMMEDIATELY

So what does the future hold for our native and very popular ash trees?

Some experts are predicting that when it arrives here (and it will), it will be devastating. Some predict with education, we may be able to keep them at bay for 5-10 years, but the story with most invasive species is usually a hope for control because eradication is not practical. There is no cure for the ash trees once these insects arrive. Future tree plantings should avoid this species. Education of invasive species is vital.



D-shaped exit hole

As you enjoy the many outdoor activities in Iowa parks, please be on the look out for these unwanted pests. In ash trees only, if you see these following signs:

- D-shaped exit holes
- Die-back of the crown (dead branches at the top of an otherwise healthy tree)
- Splitting of the bark to reveal serpentine or S-shaped galleries
- Shoots/suckers coming up from the base of the tree



Shoots/suckers

please report them to Robin Pruisner, Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship 515/281-6323 or you local conservation office or district forester.

To Plant or NOT to plant.....

Trees **NOT** to plant due to **diseases**: *Scotch Pine, Blue Spruce, All Ash species.*

Trees & shrubs **NOT** to plant because they are **invasive**: *Tree of Heaven, Siberian Elm, Black Locust, Norway Maple, Bush Honeysuckles, Buckthorns, Autumn & Russian Olives, Japanese Knotweed, Gray Dogwood (to name a few).*

General Advice:

If it's not a native species, there's a good chance of it becoming an invasive! To avoid such a tragedy, contact a forester, ISU Extension, a conservation agency, or WCCB for approval.

This county's district forester is Wayne Fuhlbrugge. Wayne.Fuhlbrugge@dnr.state.ia.us

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Kirk Selltz	Badger
Mark A. Thompson	Fort Dodge

Email: conservation@webstercountyia.org



Thank You — Jon Thrans

Jon has donated many hours toward checking and maintaining the blue-bird trail at Kennedy Park...And I think he really enjoys himself. We appreciate his enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment!!

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." Aldo Leopold

THE WEBSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES TO THE PUBLIC DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST ANYONE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, SEX, CREED, NATIONAL ORIGIN, AGE OR HANDICAP. IF ANYONE BELIEVES HE OR SHE HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO SUCH DISCRIMINATION, HE OR SHE MAY FILE A COMPLAINT ALLEGING DISCRIMINATION WITH EITHER THE WEBSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD OR THE OFFICE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, U.S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR, WASHINGTON D.C. 20240