

Dickinson County Conservation Board Meeting Minutes

7 p.m., June 13, 2017

Dickinson County Nature Center, 2279 170th Street, Okoboji, IA

Chair: Joan Gronstal

Vice chair: Steve Anderson

Board members: Kathy Kleen, Willia Mueske

Employees: Lee Sorenson, Kiley Roth, Aric Ping

Board liaison: Pam Jordan

1. **Call to order at 7:03 p.m.**
2. **Agenda approval motion by Mueske, second by Anderson. Approved.**
3. **Approval of past month's minutes motion by Anderson, second by Kleen. Approved.**
4. **Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County update:** Al and Delores Maser came and gave an update on the fundraising, which has struggled since Historic Arnolds Park is fundraising for its capital project at the same time. The bid for the construction project was awarded to Poppema-Sikma Construction of Sheldon. The foundation is looking for board members for any people who are interested in applying.
5. **Environmental education update:** Kayaking programs and camps filled well in June.
6. **Dickinson County Conservation Board Areas**
 - **Horseshoe bend (Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program agreement):** This is a cost-share agreement for tree removal at Horseshoe Bend. Approved.
 - **Land request exchange:** A property owner adjacent to Kenue Park, along Brooks North Lane, would like to trade a section of land for building but it is under a conservation easement for public use so the land transaction will not be possible.
 - **Land management plans:** Vegetation specialist Aric Ping updated the board that the Integrated Roadside Management Program is getting started with reseeding all secondary road ditch cleanouts with natives. Since fall, 17 cleanouts --- about 10 acres --- have been reseeded, and all prairie seed mix is free from the Tallgrass Prairie Center. Beneficial insects have been ordered to help control invasive plant species. Controlled burns are also being used as restorative measures.

Ping said no one is filing haying permits, so he isn't sure where people are haying. He has places he would like to seed to native, but he doesn't want to step on toes if someone has hayed for many years. He thinks that according to Iowa Code that a farmer is allowed to hay a ditch along his or her property. Anderson said some round bails are being left in ditches for weeks, and that could cause danger to cars along the road if a car would happen to leave the roadway and hit one. Jordan said Ping could keep track of which properties are being hayed, but Ping said some farmers may continue down the road to hay beyond their property because there is nothing stopping them from doing that. Anderson said the Department of Transportation also has rights to stop people from haying along major roadways.

Ping has created a Natural Area Management Plan over the last two years to give a direction for our land management goal: To reestablish ecological fidelity to return the structure, the composition and the functionality back to pre-European settlement. Ping has surveyed all properties and subdivided them into color-coordinated groups with similar qualities because management practices for each color group will be similar. Baselines are completed for the Horseshoe Bend and Judd wildlife areas. Superior Marsh and Pioneer Park Nature Preserve are yet to be addressed.

With each property, Ping has written potential projects for the future from mowing and maintaining to more in-depth projects.

In the last two years, Ping and the IRVM program has reseeded 93 acres of row crop and non-native areas back to prairie, wetlands and savanna. It takes a few years for that to establish. Controlled fire has returned to 500+ acres of the 700+ acres that the DCCB manages. Wildland fire training is lacking in the region, and Ping is trying to get a refresher course and additional trainings at the nature center, drawing from other county conservation boards, the DNR and more. About 50 acres of buckthorn and honeysuckle from

Horseshoe Bend as well as Little Sioux Savanna. More than 150 pounds of native seed have also been collected to add to purchased seed, and rare seeds that can't be purchased are also collected to help distribute.

- **Pioneer Park Nature Preserve Update:** The appraisal has been completed, and the Department of Natural Resources is reviewing it so that the REAP reimbursement will go through. The grand opening celebration will be 4 p.m. Tuesday, July 18, during Pioneer Days.
- **Fall Board Meeting Conference:** The meeting will be Sept. 21-23 in Sioux Center, hosted by Lyon and Sioux counties.

7. Operations and facility update

a. Recycle Center: Hazardous materials disposal came. Appliances are up to more 1,000 on site, but it needs to be at about 1,300 before Shine Bros. of Spencer will come to pick them up. Staff are considering adding a pop machine on site. The new loader is on site and is working well.

b. HSB Shop update: Specs for the new maintenance shop are completed, by an architect for Denison Drywall in Spencer. The project will go to public bid, and Anderson has volunteered to assist with the bidding process since neither the architect or Sorenson have been through that process before. The building is budgeted at \$300,000, and the architect thinks it will come in between \$250,000-\$300,000 for the 5,900-square-foot building. The building does include a climate-controlled chemical room as well as a seed room with exhaust vent for seed cleaning. There will also be motion lights in the shop area. It will be big enough to house the new equipment for the IRVM program.

c. Pollinator Paradise Update: The bid for \$454,450 was accepted, and paperwork to approve construction on county property will be started on Friday. The construction falls within the specifications of the easement on the land with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

d. Staffing Update: Environmental education coordinator Bryanna Kuhlman has set up three interviews with potential naturalists for the next two weeks. That position will hopefully be filled by August.

e. Orleans Update: The bathroom at Ainsworth-Orleans Beach is set, and all that needs to be done is to finish landscaping before it opens. Two lights have also been added to the parking lot and another to the boat ramp. Scrub trees from the boat ramp side will be removed.

f. Interdepartmental agreement: The Department of Natural Resources in Spirit Lake has an AmeriCorps contract employee that is supposed to go through October, but the state has cancelled contracts. To finish out this employee's contract, the DNR has asked the DCCB to hire the person and then the DNR would reimburse them. It is legal but is dependent on policy and risk management if that person gets hurt on the job. The board does not want to pursue this agreement.

8. Approval of Expenses: Sorenson would like to get cattle panels for a playscape tunnel, but he has to go out of town to get them so that cost will be added. He will empty out the account for an additional payment for the wheel loader. Sorenson estimates the panels at \$500. Anderson motion to approve bills with addition of cattle panels and final Ziegler CAT bill, Mueske second. Approved.

9. General Discussion

- Jordan said a demonstration on the pervious pavers by the Abbie Gardner Cabin will be held 11 a.m. Thursday.
- The Pride Group has vacated the building next to Kenue Park. The future of the building is still under discussion.

10. Adjournment motion by Kleen, second by Mueske. Approved. Adjourn at 9:20 p.m.