WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025, BOARD MEETING

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, April 10, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, and Neil Stockfleth

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
Aaron Gehling and Tom Limoges

STAFF PRESENT
Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Theresa Kruid, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT
Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison
Ryan Ericson, County Finance/Budget Director

CALL TO ORDER
Chairperson Limoges called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS
None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Chris, second by Cindy.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE:
Aye: Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett & Neil Stockfleth
Nay: None
Absent: Aaron Gehling & Tom Limoges

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

C1. Approve Minutes of the March 20, 2025, Regular Meeting

C2. Approve the March 2025 Claims and Expenditures

C3. Receive and Place on File the March 2025 Financial/Budget Report and 3rd Quarter FY24-25 Reserve Fund Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
- Birdfeeders from Bob Meis
- $40 donation from Marth McMurry
- $400 from Bruce & Jeanette for Cole McClure Memorial bench
- $50 from Arlin & Arlene Milbrodt for Sandy Gerritson Memorial

- Chuck Johnson Memorial gifts: (Total = $2,123.49)
  - Cash $25
  - John Pecaut $193.53
  - Anne Shaner $100
  - William & Susan Wilder $250
  - Jean Ziebell $500
  - Kevin & Marla Kerr $100
  - The Pierson Family $77.92
  - Marian Riggs $97.52
  - Janet Shaner $50
  - Marvin & Karen Heidman $97.52
  - Jon & Anne Cleghorn $75
  - Michael & Linda Cadwell $25
  - Nancy Cord $50
  - Duane & Peggy Hoffmeyer $50
  - Richard & Jan Null $20
  - Greg Gregerson $100
  - Gerald Von Ehwegen $30
  - William & Dianne Blankenship $50
  - Dawn Snyder $50
  - Theresa Kruid $50
  - Edward & Jane Sibley $100

ITEM R2. FEMA Updates – Little Sioux Park

Brian reported that the project is going slow. FEMA requested insurance information for the cabins. Dan stated that Mike Montino has provided FEMA with several documents, but he is not sure if FEMA will reimburse for the Snyder Bend cabin remediation. The county is self-insured but goes through a third-party insurance agent. The cabins are insured at $50,000 or higher, but he doesn't think there is flood insurance. The cabins are in the flood plain. Mike Montino has been handling this and is trying to find out if flood insurance can be obtained.

Brian stated that Holly Brown Construction was given approval to start a couple weeks ago, but he is not sure when they will start. Part of the trail is still waiting for approval because replacement of broken and cracked panels was added to the project. The bank erosion by the shelter is further from being approved. Brian stated that he wanted to make sure the plans were approved before doing any of the work.

(Items R3 & R4 were addressed in reverse order because Supervisor Nelson had to leave early, and Dan wanted him there to answer questions.)

ITEM R4. Budget Cuts

Dan gave an update on the FY26 budget approval process, stating that even with the budget cuts made so far, general basic is still $1 million short. Supervisor Nelson called Dan before the last Board of Supervisors meeting and stated that more cuts were needed. Dan agreed to forfeit six summer security guard positions since they have not been filled in recent years due to the rate being too low to attract certified officers. He also agreed not to fill three summer maintenance positions and three summer ranger positions for a total budget reduction of $105,099.42.

MOTION by Chris, second by Cindy.

To authorize and approve the FY 25-26 budget reduction in the amount of $105,099.42.[25-13]

VOTE:
Aye: Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, & Neil Stockfleth
Nay: None
Absent: Aaron Gehling & Tom Limoges

Dan stated that he and Brian talked with the resource managers to explain the situation as it would affect them greatly, but they understood that this would be better than full-time staff cuts. There are seven seasonal park positions remaining besides concession staff. Dan stated that they will be looking at cutting back on mowing and other operations at the parks, and he has asked staff to put ideas forth.

[25-13] To authorize and approve the FY 25-26 budget reduction in the amount of $105,099.42.

Supervisor Nelson summarized the current budget situation, the legislative actions contributing to the shortfall, and the Board of Supervisors' plan to deal with it. He expressed appreciation of the efforts made by the department and stated that he expects the budget to be approved without any further cuts.

ITEM R3. Nature Calls & Nature Center's 30th Anniversary

Theresa reported that she followed up on a suggestion from last month's discussion to check into Eppley Auditorium as a possible venue for the Photo Ark program and found that it was much cheaper at $1,500. She presented an updated comparison sheet for the various location options. She acknowledged that there are still unknowns for the new event, but she believes Sartore has a great project and hopes that it would draw similar sponsorships to Nature Calls. She stated that she is willing to go ahead with Nature Calls if the board is not comfortable with trying this new event. Dan said that the board will need to look at how Nature Calls can be updated in the future to reduce the amount of staff time required. The board agreed by consensus to go forward with Nature Calls again this year with the intent of considering other options in the future. Theresa expressed appreciation to the board for all their help in obtaining sponsorships.

ITEM R5. Owego Grazing RFPs

Brian stated that Resource Manager, Josh VanVoorst, has been talking about cattle grazing at Owego in the long-range planning for some time and said that it would stimulate some more biodiversity. Josh has worked on a grazing plan and map and would like to try it on one section for a year. Josh has talked to Pottawattamie County who has used grazing in several of their areas and has also contacted the state but hasn't gotten a response. Neil cautioned staff to have a publicity piece that explains the reason and the goal of the grazing. Brian stated that the bids will stipulate a minimum bid of $30/acre but expects that it will go much higher. Dan said that they will put it out for bids and ask for formal action in a couple months.

ITEM R6. Department Reports

1. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for March was presented.
- There were a couple cancellations due to blizzards in March.
- Field trips are kicking off.
- Public camp registration started on Wednesday, and 65 kids have been registered.
- The exhibit installation has been delayed, so Theresa got an extension for the Gilchrist grant. Installation should be done by the first week of June.
- Kari & Maria attended the spring IAN workshop in early March.
- Shelby has been contacting volunteers to help with camps.
- Mariah and Shelby went to a STEM festival on Wednesday with 400 kids and provided an owl pellet activity.
- The Insect Zoo program sponsored by the Foundation was very popular with 588 people attending.
- Staff will start planning Nature Calls and summer camps.
- Cindy asked if the classroom rentals have been staying up with the price increase. Dan said info will be gathered and provided at the next meeting.

2. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Park staff is getting the parks ready to open on May 1st. The buildings are mostly ready to go, but there were a few surprises with plumbing issues and a water leak by the dump station at Little Sioux.
- Little Sioux staff have their spring burns mostly wrapped up. They had a good result with the burn on the Briese property.
- Southwood staff participated in controlled burns of 2,700 acres during the cooperative burn week. Erik Lindsay is on the planning committee and said he received very good reports back about Southwood staff members, Brodie and Tanner, for their knowledge and working well with others.
- Little Sioux staff has been working on seeding in the dirt added by the beach. Some is a pollinator mix and won't be mowed, but there will still be access along the lake.
- Brown's Lake/Snyder Bend staff have been getting a burn ready for two or three Owego units.

ITEM R7. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Nature Center Floor & Foundation

Dan reported that Concrete Raising Services came two weeks ago and did some foam jacking. They had to order additional hose to get to the back section of the classrooms. They will continue to monitor the foundation to see if there is any more movement.

2. Little Sioux Park Concession Stand

Dan stated that the pad for the Little Sioux concession stand was built and packed when the dirt work for the shoreline was done. The contractor will form and pour it as soon as they are able.

3. Little Sioux Park Dirt Work – Fill Tree Site

Brian had already covered this earlier. The project is done, and staff will be seeding it.

4. Little Sioux Park Electrical Update

Dan stated that the primary has been plowed to the concession stand. The contractor that bored under the pond had to go 60' down because of all the rocks which increased the tubing needed from 140' to 250'. Dan had them go with a 3" rather than 2" duct at Shoon Construction's recommendation. The transformer is in, and the bathhouse will be hooked up to that line. The duct is also under the road and ready to go if needed for future expansion.

5. Izaak Walton League RFP Selection

After the board selected the contractor last month, Brian discovered that they were planning to take the building to a local hole and burn it, which isn't allowed by the state. He asked them to redo their figures, and Steinhoff still had the low bid. The material will now be hauled to Jackson, which will cost an additional $2,800 plus the disposal fee. The building was too close to other properties for a fire department to do a controlled training burn. The demo permit has been mailed in, and work could start tomorrow or as soon as they are available.

ITEM R8. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items (Dan)

a. Set Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on May 8, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. The board will also do long-range planning with the nature center staff afterwards.

2. Board Information

None

3. Other Business

Theresa reported that Chuck Johnson, a former volunteer, has passed away at 94 years old.

4. Old Business

None

ITEM R9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chair, Tom Limoges