WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, JULY 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, July 10, 2025, at Little Sioux Park beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Aaron Gehling (by phone), Chris Zellmer-Zant (by phone), Neil Stockfleth (by phone), and Tom Limoges

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
Cindy Bennett

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

OTHERS PRESENT
Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

CALL TO ORDER
Chairperson Limoges called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS
None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Neil, second by Chris.

To approve the consent agenda.

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

C1. Approve Minutes of June 19, 2025, Regular Meeting

C2. Approve the June 2025 Claims and Expenditures

C3. Receive and Place on File the June 2025 Financial/Budget Report and 4th Quarter FY24-25 Reserve Fund Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
- Butterly enclosure from Sheryl Banks
- Hummingbird feeder and 3 books from Bob & Phyllis Nickolson
- $200 from David & Kathleen Stienstra

(Aaron joined the meeting by phone at 4:05 p.m.)

ITEM R2. Little Sioux Park Dirt Work NW of Road

Dan reported that dirt work is needed in the area that was cleared last year near the tent camping along the northwest section of the road. The area should be leveled and a tube installed to improve drainage into the pond. He obtained a quote but recommended that the board postpone the project due to insufficient funds in the CIP account. The board agreed to defer the project until a later date.

ITEM R3. Department Reports

1. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for June was presented.
- The exhibit updates should be completed by the end of August.
- Summer camps are up to 85-87% full. One camp had to be cancelled because only 3-4 kids were registered.
- Nature Calls:
  - Sponsorships (in hand or committed) are up to $11,450. Letters are out, and sponsors are being contacted.
  - Theresa needs to have sponsorship commitments in August to get them in the brochure. She will email a sponsorship status list at the first of the month so board members can follow up with them.
  - The bear logo design was presented.
  - Dan's aunt delivered a beautiful quilt that she created with t-shirts from the last 20 Nature Calls events. It will be used for a special raffle.
  - Primus Villas will provide a trip again. They offer Costa Rico, Belize, or Cabo.
  - Shelby is starting to work on recruiting volunteers for the event.
  - A committee meeting will be held in a couple of weeks.
- Staff is working on plans for the nature center's 30th anniversary event. Kay Neuman has confirmed that she will present a live eagle program.
- Mariah Myers had her two-year anniversary today.
- The Senior Aide is currently on medical leave, but the AARP program has been put on hold due to lack of funding. Summer naturalists have been helping cover weekends.
- The *Meet the Animals* program attracted nearly 535 attendees. The trolley operated smoothly, transporting about 50 participants. Additional attractions included the SDSU ice cream truck and a booth hosted by the 185th Air Guard.
- Root beer float day is August 6th.
- Shelby has done a great job enlisting a few new junior volunteers to assist with projects and summer camps by reaching out to high school counselors and theater students. Dawn Snyder has dedicated many volunteer hours working in the gardens.
- It was announced that the Siouxland Big Give event will not be held this year due to a variety of reasons.

2. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- The fourth of July weekend went smoothly with good attendance at most parks. Southwood only had about eight campers, but the other parks were close to being full.

- Derek provided the following update on Little Sioux Park.
  - On Father's Day weekend, only a couple of sites remained available in Riverside campground, and the same was true two weekends later. Bellamy campground typically fills only 25-50% of its sites. Bellamy offers electric only sites suited for smaller campers. The sites are at a right angle to the road, making them more difficult to back into. Previously planned renovations have been delayed until funding becomes available.
  - Tom noted that he received good comments about the improvements at Little Sioux Park during the Pheasants Forever fishing derby held there.
  - A hydrant was run over on the fourth of July weekend, but Mike Barkley is fixing it now.
  - Staff have been busy keeping up with mowing and trimming following the recent rains, as well as removing dying ash and cottonwood trees.
  - The native grass seeded at the entrance and near the pond received its first mowing. Turf grass is establishing well and has now been mowed for three weeks.
- Brown's Lake and Snyder Bend staff cleaned up the Izaak Walton League building site and mowed the property. Boulders were placed along the edge to prevent vehicles from driving on it. The main hall pad was preserved and turned out very well. Anchor bolts along the edge still need to be ground off and taper fill added around it. The pad could serve as a foundation for a shelter, basketball hoops, or grills in the future.
- Southwood staff have been focusing on spraying crown vetch, which has been growing with the rain. They have been working to reduce these patches for the past five years. While it cannot be eliminated completely, the goal is to keep it contained to smaller, manageable areas.

ITEM R4. Capital Improvement Projects

1. Little Sioux Park & Concession Stand Update

Dan stated that prior to the meeting he met with the contractor about the concession stand project. Rain had delayed concrete pouring and steel installation, but the steel is now nearly complete, and the contractor plans to pour concrete on Monday. Afterward, the electrician and plumber can finish their work. The contractor anticipates the project will be ready by Wednesday, allowing staff to set up for a soft opening on Friday. Sidewalks to the boat dock will still need to be poured.

Each concession employee will have a unique Square login. All items will be barcoded for scanner use, and the Square system will provide inventory alerts. Brian orders most of the stock from CoreMark, with the remainder from Sam's Club.

Square reports indicate sales at Brown's Lake were up 50% compared to last June. Pedal boats are the top seller, followed by kayaks and then stand-up paddle boards. Neil noted that he was amazed at the high number of rentals he observed on Sunday. Tom stated that he wouldn't have an issue with adding a few more pedal boats or kayaks if they are selling out over the weekends. Dan agreed that additional boats could be considered if demand warrants it.

Aaron was approached by a Boy Scout troop interested in using or renting canoes or kayaks. Dan said it hasn't been done before and said he would need to consult the county attorney and HR director about insurance and liability. Theresa suggested having them contact the nature center to schedule a naturalist program for them at a park. Aaron will follow up for more details.

2. Little Sioux Park Road Update

Dan thanked Mark Nelson for his help in securing the Board of Supervisors funding for the Little Sioux Road project. On Tuesday, the board voted 5-0 to fund the road for $298,000. The project will focus on replacing the worst section of the road. In the next few years, if there is a nearby

blacktop project, the remainder may be completed. The county engineer expects the road to last 30-40 years, given the lighter traffic compared to public roads. The project is scheduled for completion by the end of July.

Tom suggested promoting all the improvements at Little Sioux, including the new concession stand, tree removal, and road upgrades. Dan stated he could contact Tim Hytrek to create a feature story.

3. Izaak Walton League Building Update

Brian reported on this project earlier in the meeting.

ITEM R5. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. Set Next Meeting Date and Location

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on September 11, 2025, at Brown's Lake.

Dan asked the board for feedback on holding meetings in the parks. He explained that the intent was to give board members an opportunity to see park improvements and projects firsthand. However, he noted that if attendance is low, it may not be worthwhile for park staff to prepare for the visit or for administrative staff to travel to the parks.

b. CF Industries Agreement

Dan presented agreements from CF Industries to transfer the care and maintenance of two properties to Woodbury County Conservation Board for wildlife habitat management. Neil has been assisting Dan with the process. Dan has reviewed the agreements and does not see any issues. If the board has no questions or concerns, he will forward the agreements to the county attorney for review.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Tom.

To approve and authorize the agreements as presented for the maintenance of property owned by CF Industries as wildlife habitat, contingent upon review and approval by the county attorney.[25-19]

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

Dan and Neil both commended Tyler Flammang for the excellent map work and logos for this project.

[25-19] To approve and authorize the agreements as presented for the maintenance of property owned by CF Industries as wildlife habitat, contingent upon review and approval by the county attorney.

c. Endowment Update

Discussion at last month's meeting regarding the endowment donation was revisited so Tom could provide input, as he was not present previously. Tom reported that their client had met with an attorney, and the endowment has been established in trust form and is complete. He suggested that the board visit other nature centers to evaluate what is lacking and the potential for DPNC expansion. Once that assessment is made, if the board chooses to proceed, plans will need to be drawn up and fundraising be initiated.

Dan stated that he wants the board to meet with staff for input. A decision will also need to be made on whether to hire a fundraising company or do it in-house. He emphasized a cautious approach and suggested waiting to see how tight next year's budget is. He prefers not to launch a full-scale campaign if regular budget concerns persist. Tom encouraged Dan to consider moving forward with the project regardless of the economy, noting that it is a long-term initiative and should not be delayed by short-term budget issues.

Dan added that a lot of decisions need to be addressed with staff regarding needs and priorities. CMBD said they could create renditions, but the building location must first be determined. He also noted that the foundation is still being monitored for a year to determine if piers will be necessary. Mark agreed that until the building is stabilized, architects cannot fully know how to proceed.

Finally, Dan asked Tom to verify that an endowment has been established for the maintenance of the building and for annual care of the mounts, as agreed, and to inform the client that the board is working towards these goals. Tom noted that a contingency plan is in place in case the project doesn't happen.

d. Hecox Ingerthon Land Deal Update

Neil stated that the Hecox Ingerthron land was sold to a buyer from Minnesota, as there were no prospective deals with the board that appeared likely to close. The new owners will not take control until 2026, and there is a possibility they may not wish to maintain the property long-term given the distance.

Neil also mentioned a potential opportunity for land near Correctionville, which has more timber and no cropland. Dan will follow up with Neil to obtain additional information.

2. Board Information

None

3. Other Business

<u>Law Enforcement Center Seeding Issue</u>:
Kenny Schmitz contacted Dan regarding the prairie planting at the law enforcement center and how it has been managed. Brian and Dan inspected it and found several issues. The contract called for fertilizing and watering, but that is not done to prairie. Dan offered to have staff mow it three times and burn it. He will be meeting Shane from Baker Group out there next week because he wants to hear what Dan thinks. They want a letter from Dan to use in their lawsuit.

Mark stated that the civil engineer will meet them out there on Tuesday. There was no dirt stabilization done, and it was pushed back up after rain made gullies, so the dirt is mixed and

has no topsoil. He has no problem with the conservation board taking over, but they need to document everything they do so they will be compensated for their time.

Tom noted that Erik has approximately 64 acres of projects scheduled for replanting in collaboration with Pheasants Forever. They are also pursuing a Gilchrist grant to support the effort. This will be a strong project for the fall and is expected to enhance those areas significantly.

Little Sioux Park Outlet:
Dan stated that a new pond outlet structure was installed at Little Sioux shortly before he began employment with Woodbury County. Since then, silt has built up behind the temporary dam, covering much of the bottom. There are natural springs in the area, but it is thought that they may be getting plugged. Staff noted the area used to be much deeper. Dan will ask Johnston Excavating for a quote to excavate the area and relocate the material to where fill is needed. The goal is to clean out the area and restore flow from the springs. The board expressed support for the project.

Little Sioux Park Internet and Wi-Fi Expansion:
Brian reported that internet has been successfully connected to the stand. Equipment is in place to eventually expand service to the campground, but access points will need to be added within the campground itself. A quote is needed to determine the cost of providing Wi-Fi for the campgrounds. Dan noted that the beach should have signal coverage and that the current internet speed is 80 Mbps up and down. Brian stated that the infrastructure includes a pole by the shop, a pole by the swan pen, and a connection to the concession stand. Dan concluded that quotes will be gathered, but project selection will depend on available CIP funding.

4. Old Business

Tom inquired about the possibility of the swans being returned to Little Sioux Park. Derek responded that, hopefully, the water level will rise enough to allow for their return.

ITEM R6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

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Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

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Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

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Board Chair, Tom Limoges