WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 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, September 11, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
None

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

OTHERS PRESENT
None

CALL TO ORDER
Chairperson Tom Limoges called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS
None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

The agenda was amended to move items R5-2 and R6-1 (f & g) immediately after item R2 to accommodate for early board member departures.

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron

To approve the consent agenda as amended.

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

C1. Approve Minutes of July 10, 2025, Regular Meeting

C2. Approve the July 2025 and August 2025 Claims and Expenditures

C3. Receive and Place on File the June FY25 Final Accrued, July 2025, and August 2025 Financial/Budget Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:

- 8 Arborvitae trees from Home Depot (planted at Little Sioux Park)
- Case of water from Jana Sawin-Peterson
- Ice Cream Buckets from Patty Erickson
- $38.71 (via WCCF) from Suzan Stewart for Rocky DeWitt Memorial for Shooting Range
- $106.12 from Mark Promes (SDSU Ice Cream Truck)
- $500 from Ronald Yockey & Connie Smith for Scholarships
  (Memorial Gift for loved ones of Sandy Baron; Shelia Bernstein; Margo Chesebro; John Werner, and Alison Werner Smith)

ITEM R2. Riverside Land Request

Tom shared a request from an interested party to purchase conservation land in Riverside Hills for residential development. Dan explained that the land was acquired with REAP grants to prevent development, and selling would require repayment at current value. He recommended that the board does not sell it, even though it has been a difficult area to manage.

(Chris arrived at 4:06 p.m.)

Staff and board members expressed concerns about selling conservation land, despite it being within city limits, because it is part of the Loess Hills and scenic byway and there are cultural resources on the property.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Neil

To reject the offer to purchase land in Riverside Hills and to address the future management of the property during long-term planning.[25-20]

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

ITEM R6. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items

f. Endowment Update

Discussion was held on the proposed Nature Center addition. Dan, Brian and Theresa recently met with the CMBA architects to determine the best location option for the addition. Terry Glade suggested doing two levels instead of three because of the elevator. They would create a rendition drawing and 3D model of the nature center with the new addition. Any construction would have to wait a year until the building's foundation situation is figured out. Dan reported that nature center staff have raised concerns about the animal displays and how they were obtained, the aesthetics of the

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addition, and the overall alignment with the nature center's mission. It was also noted that the project needs to be discussed with the Pecaut family and the Foundation before moving forward.

The board agreed by consensus to table action on the CMBA agreement until next month and asked for staff to make contacts with the Pecaut family and Foundation before next month's meeting.

(Tom left the meeting at 4:40 p.m. Aaron assumed chair duties.)

g. Needs Assessment Survey Questions Review

Dan presented the survey questions proposed by SIMPCO and stated that they would like to limit the survey to 15-20 questions. The board reviewed and updated the list of questions, and Dan will send them to SIMPCO.

ITEM R5. Capital Improvement

2. Little Sioux Park Internet

Brian presented a quote from the contractor who ran fiber to the concession stand last year for expanding the Wi-Fi to cover the campgrounds. He explained that cell phone service isn't very strong, and Wi-Fi will be needed to introduce acceptance of online payments using QR codes at the campsites. The quote includes coverage for Bellamy and Riverside campgrounds, as well as Heritage Shelter. Some of the backbone equipment that will be needed to cover Riverside campground has already been installed. There would be an option to make one channel free and offer faster speed channels for a fee to campers. It was noted that it would be a good safety feature for receiving severe weather warnings, in addition to being used for entertainment.

MOTION by Neil, second by Cindy

To move forward on providing internet coverage for the campgrounds at Little Sioux Park with the option to sell an advanced service at a profit.[25-21]

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

ITEM R3. Google Great Outdoor Foundation Opportunities

Dan reviewed his previous discussions with Bolton & Menke a couple years ago when they were looking for projects that might qualify for the Great Outdoor Foundation and its priorities. They had sent an email to all counties in northwest Iowa, but only Woodbury and Plymouth responded. Dan had suggested Owego and Oak Ridge as possible projects at that time, but nothing came of it. He reported that recently Google and the Great Outdoor Foundation have

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changed their deliverables and expressed renewed interest in the Owego and Oak Ridge dam projects.

At Owego, they would look at expanding some of the basins that are narrow and silted in and possibly pumping water from the ditches using solar power to filter it through the cells. A new high-risk dam could be built at Oak Ridge creating another pond. They could also possibly raise the level in the existing dam at Fowler Forest.

MOTION by Neil, second by Chris

To move forward with the Great Outdoor Foundation opportunities proposal.[25-22]

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

ITEM R4. Department Reports

1. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The program and visitor reports for July and August were presented.
- Summer camps and events were successful, including the Meet the Animals event with the SDSU ice cream truck and the Summer Send-Off event with root beer floats and nature play activities for families.
- Field trips and classroom programs are being scheduled.
- School of the Wild is scheduled with Woodbury Central fifth graders at Southwood Conservation Area on September 29-October 2.
- Nature Calls:
  - Sponsorships are up to $25,400 in hand with an additional $4,125 pledged. A few sponsors have not returned this year for a variety of reasons.
  - More volunteers were needed due to needing to pour beer for 11 of the 16 tables. The Glazers sales team won a trip and ballgame tickets for the same weekend. Suppliers have stated that it is harder to get their staff to volunteer for these types of events.
  - Ticket sales are down quite a bit. Last year a total of 165 tickets were sold, which was low in comparison to previous years at over 250. There are a lot of other events going on for other nonprofit organizations the same weekend.
- The pollinator mural installation did not go well but is being resolved and should be finished this weekend.
- Two large events are planned for the nature center's 30th anniversary in October.
  - A Hike-a-thon will be going on all month. Scheels is providing prizes, and Absolute Screen Art is printing bandanas.
  - A family-friendly celebration event will be held on October 18th with various family activities and a live eagle presentation.

[25-22] To move forward with the Great Outdoor Foundation opportunities proposal.

(Aaron left the meeting at 5:37 p.m. Neil took over as chair.)

2. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Labor Day weekend went smoothly with no major incidents. Attendance was mixed with a couple of campgrounds being full and others 50-75% full.
- Snyder Bend staff has been working on pumping at Owego.
- The drag line has finally been removed from Owego.
- Southwood staff have been working on habitat improvement projects, mowing, and prairie restorations. They also helped the LEC by mowing around the jail building.
- Little Sioux staff has been keeping up on maintenance since losing all but one of their seasonal employees. They also completed shouldering work on the new park road section and have been hauling asphalt grindings and spreading them where needed.
- A quote was received from Sir Lines-A-Lot to paint stripes on the Little Sioux roads for $1800 and the nature center parking lot for $1600.
- Upcoming trainings include pesticide, emergency vehicle operation course (a new requirement), and CCPOA pistol qualification & other CEUs.

ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects

1. Little Sioux Park Road Update

(Update was given during park activities report.)

2. Little Sioux Park Internet

(Addressed earlier in the meeting.)

3. Little Sioux Outlet Cleanout

Dan reported that the quote for the Little Sioux outlet cleanout came in at about $5,000. It will be cleaned out with a long reach excavator, piled on the south bank until dry, and then hauled to the west side of the road. Brian stated that it won't all be assessable with the long reach, so they will have to make a bench.

MOTION by Cindy, second by Chris

To proceed with the Little Sioux outlet cleanout project as presented. [25-23]

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

[25-23] To proceed with the Little Sioux outlet cleanout project as presented.

ITEM R6. 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 October 9, 2025, at Brown's Lake Bigelow Park.

b. Concession Stand Financials

Dan reported on the concession stand sales for the summer. Brown's Lake concession was open May 24th through August 31st and had total gross sales of $12,589, including 679 rentals accounting for $6,420. Little Sioux concession was open July 19th through September 1st and had total gross sales of $5,323 including 299 rentals accounting for $2,796. Dan stated that, after discussions with staff, he has decided to purchase an additional pedal boat for Little Sioux Park next spring.

c. Budget FY 26/27

Dan presented an initial draft of the FY27 budget, which is essentially the same as last year, with the addition of the motor vehicle line again. He is also going to request bringing the rest of the seasonal staff back, other than the security guards. He noted that there might be a few other tweaks within the budget, and he will have it ready for approval next month.

d. CF Industries Agreement

Dan stated that he hopes to receive a call from the county attorney tomorrow to address the CF Industries agreement. The attorney is concerned about wording that allows people other than CF Industries to access the property. Dan doesn't believe it would create a county liability though, since it is simply a management agreement and will still be owned by CF Industries.

e. Nature Center Cleaning Contract

Dan informed the board that the nature center cleaning service had given notice and quit effective July 1st. He decided to try having nature center staff clean the center to save county money, but after a month and a half, he realized it was a mistake. It took many more staff hours than he expected, although he noted that it was the cleanest the center has been in years. He obtained bids and has contracted with Bright and Shine Cleaning Service at an annual cost of $15,168, which is a cost savings of $1,300 compared to the previous service. They will clean twice a week on Mondays and Fridays.

f. Endowment Update

(Addressed earlier in the meeting.)

g. Needs Assessment Survey Questions Review

(Addressed earlier in the meeting.)

2. Board Information

None

3. Other Business

Dan met with Nick Hytrek from the Sioux City Journal at Little Sioux Park this morning. They went through all the projects completed at Little Sioux Park in the last couple years. He asked about other projects, and Dan mentioned the rework of the exhibits at the nature center. Nick will contact Theresa sometime after Nature Calls for more information.

Brian and Dan have been talking with the DOT on a possible collaboration with the DOT, Iowa State Extension, UNI, and the conservation department for a roadside prairie project at their building on Highway 20.

4. Old Business

None

ITEM R7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 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