



PRAIRIE HILLS JOURNAL

Bi-annual publication of the
Harrison County Conservation Board

MISSION: To provide, develop and maintain facilities and programs that will enable county residents and visitors to understand, appreciate, and enjoy Harrison County's natural environment and encourage them to preserve it.

SPRING / SUMMER | 2022

And We're Off and Running

by Scott Nelson, Director

It's finally started—ground breaking began with the ceremonial golden shovels on September 13, 2021! Soon after, the dozers and backhoes moved in to create the giant hole for the basement portion of the 2-story, 14,000 sq ft facility. And as expected in these interesting times, the supply chain crinkled in on us. First, it was “can we find concrete?”, then it was “can we find re-bar?”. Eventually, both questions were positively answered, and Meco-Henne Construction of Omaha began with footings and pouring walls. Did I mention it's finally started!?

Since the last newsletter, the HCCB was awarded a Community Attractions and Tourism (CAT) grant through the State of Iowa for \$400,000. This was a huge game-changer that most definitely shrunk the gap on Phase II Building Construction. And there were also donations from banks, businesses, and every-day people that gave generously to help make this a reality. Did we mention that there will be a “Giving Wall” that will recognize all the contributors to the new Willow Lake Nature Center? If you'd like to see your family, business, or organizational name permanently and perpetually displayed, please get ahold of me and we can discuss this further!

Phase III, which is the exhibit and display stage is happening simultaneous with the construction phase, and is being undertaken by McCullough Creative, based out of Dubuque, Iowa. They

are helping facilitate everything from the kick-off meeting all the way through installation. The plan is to move these exhibits into the new building once we get the keys—sometime next winter. We

are still working on grants and partnering with organizations who would like to sponsor one of these displays, and if you are interested in leaving your mark for

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September 13th, 2021 ground breaking ceremony with HCCB President Ben McIntosh, Harrison County Supervisor Walter Utman, Secretary Pete Ryerson, Vice President Kris Pauley, board members Kim Nunez and Danelle Myer.

Continued from page 1.

current and future generations, please contact me at any time.

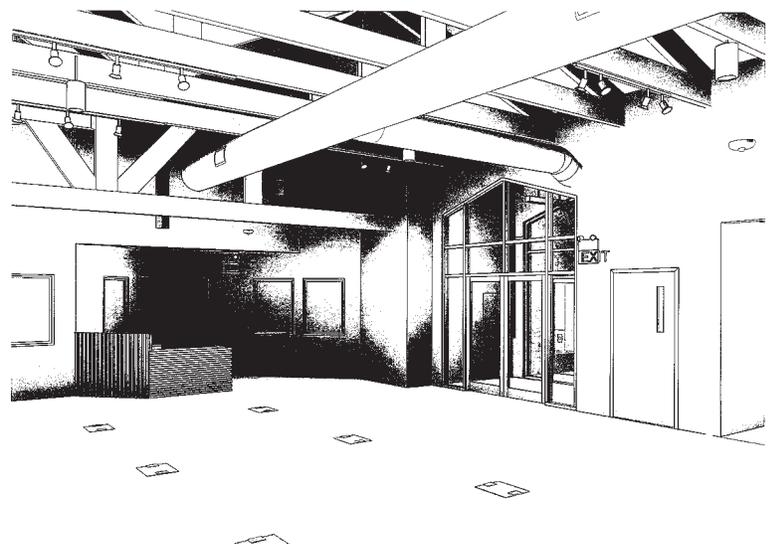
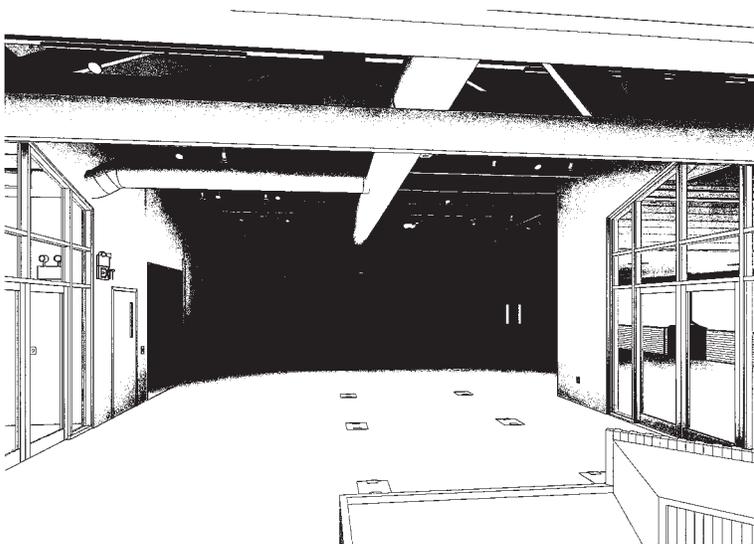
As with most of my articles in the past few years, the focus has been on the Willow Lake Nature Center, but there is so much more that happens every day at your parks and wildlife areas. Staff has always done a great job at keeping all of you in the loop as to what's going on, but I want to tip my hat to each and every one of them—they do an awesome job to ensure that everyone has a great outdoor experience.



DUE TO CONSTRUCTION:
*Access restricted
to Willow Lake office
until further notice.*

CALL 712-647-2785
*for a park ranger
to assist you.*

*This does not affect
access to the park,
campground, or cabins.*



Spring / Summer Calendar

Deluxe Cabin Open House

Sunday, April 3rd, 1-3 p.m.

Willow Lake Recreation Area, Woodbine

In 2020, HCCB added three new rental cabins at Willow Lake and with the COVID pandemic, we didn't get a chance to show them off—now's our chance! Come out to tour all six deluxe cabins and make plans for your next family getaway. Two cabins are located on the east side of the lake on top of the hill and four cabins are on the west side. Drive around and stop in to check them out!



Fabulous Fireflies

Friday, June 17th, 8 p.m.

Willow Lake Recreation Area, Woodbine

Bring the kids out to learn all about fireflies—how and why they blink. We'll play a game to “talk” like fireflies, make our own glowing craft to take home, and catch real fireflies! Meet at the large shelter. No cost or registration

Cancelled if heavy rain.

Movie in the Park

June 11th, July 9th, and August 13th

Starts at Dusk

Willow Lake Recreation Area, Woodbine

Held at the large shelter; choice of movie announced on HCCB's Facebook page; bring a lawn chair and drink, we'll provide the popcorn and fun!

Cancelled if heavy rain.



Making Memories One Campsite At A Time

CAMPING COUPON

FREE NIGHT

**Willow Lake or Schaben Park
Opening Weekend Only**

April 1st or 2nd

Parks Open April 1st!



Parks & Recreation

A Rising Tide

By Mike Weis, Operations Supervisor/Park Ranger

Although winter is well upon us as I write this article, I can't help but think of warmer temperatures. People often ask what we do in winter since there is no grass to mow. Just one of the plethora of things we do is write grants. An old adage says a rising tide lifts all boats. When I hear this saying, it takes me straight to Willow Lake and is a fitting lead in to some other projects slated for 2022. The Harrison County Conservation Board (HCCB) hasn't halted progress elsewhere just because of the ongoing Willow Lake Nature Center construction project. We recently applied for and were awarded two separate grants for two different projects.

The first is through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fish Habitat Grant Program and is funded via a habitat fee when purchasing a fishing license. The County Conservation Boards are divided into six districts across the state, and within each district the winning projects are awarded 90% of the total project cost. This grant source has been a great boon for the HCCB having funded several fish habitat projects in the past including fishing jetties, shoreline armoring, and silt pond renovations. HCCB was recently awarded another grant to do an additional silt pond renovation at Willow Lake! The great part about this particular silt pond renovation is that it will create a new fishable body of water. The dam and tube will both be raised in height by 5 feet, and will create approximately 3.5 acres of surface water with a max depth of over 10 feet. A short walk from the campground will allow for great shoreline access on the newly formed pond.

As some of you may have noticed this summer, there was a porta-pot in front of our pit latrine near the beach and boat ramp. While this isn't something we were expecting to need to do for a number of years, the facility has become unfit for use. Fortunately for us, we received another grant from the Iowa DNR Water Recreation Access cost-share program. This program covers 75% of the total cost and the funds are collected from

the Marine Fuel Tax. What this will allow us to do is replace the old structure with a new pit latrine from Huffcutt Concrete, Inc. It will be very similar to the pit latrine that is located further into the park near the camp host site. This will provide us with a greatly improved structure that will contain both a urinal and a riser and will be made completely of concrete, so maintenance will be greatly reduced. Due to the time lag in acquiring materials and the back log that has been created, we likely won't begin on this project until around July. In the meantime, we will continue to make use of the porta-pot, in order to provide a facility to the large amounts of traffic produced by the beach.

An incredible number of grants have been awarded to HCCB to complete projects since I arrived here just over a decade ago. There are many different entities that provide such opportunities, and each has very different qualifications and impacts, but one thing is for certain, HCCB wouldn't be remotely close to where we are without them!



Natural Resources & Wildlife Management

The Circle of Life

By Thad Pothast, Natural Resource Technician/Weed Commissioner

Decades and decades may pass and the trees in a timber are never thought about. Certainly, a lot of people enjoy what a timber has to offer, whether that is hunting for mushrooms, chasing that trophy buck, or simply just passing through and enjoying the sights and smells that it may provide. But as time passes and decades come and go, timbers are mostly “on their own”. Unfortunately, over this passing of time, the overall health of the timber declines as flora and fauna diversity decreases. Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) projects can help flip the script on this decline in diversity and improve the overall health of the timber. One method of TSI can be the use of girdling.



Girdling severs the cambium (growing tissue) around the outside edge of the tree. The girdle disrupts the ability of a tree to move water and sugars between the roots and stems, eventually starving and killing the tree above the girdle. Cutting to a depth of about $\frac{1}{4}$ the diameter of the tree, all the way around the tree, disrupts this cambium. It is recommended to do two girdling lines about one foot from each other, roughly hip high on the trunk.

There are many positives to girdle when doing a TSI project. It is considerably quicker to girdle a tree than it is to cut it down (fell). Since the tree is left standing, it is usually safer to sawyer than dropping. A girdled tree will often stand for several years, becoming a source of insects for woodpeckers and creating cavities for other birds to utilize. Standing dead trees are great options for someone needing cured and dried firewood. Trees that are entangled with other nearby trees or that have other hazards are often dangerous to cut down, so girdling is a great option for those situations.

Girdling can be done year-round for most species such as hackberry, ironwood, and mulberry. However, caution should be exercised in a few situations. If an oak tree is damaged or cut during the growing season, it can introduce disease into the oak community and spread it to other nearby oaks. Oak trees should only be cut or girdled during the dormant season. Species such as the invasive Tree of Heaven, or problematic black locust are aggressive root sprouters that can spread and colonize rapidly. Girdling should be avoided on these species to reduce sprouting and minimize the density of the infestation.

It's important to recognize and understand the pros and cons of the decisions needed for any TSI project. Traditional felling should certainly still be utilized when doing any TSI work. Girdling should also be considered and implemented when it makes more sense to leave the tree standing instead of putting it on the ground. The goal of most TSI projects is to improve the overall health of the timber. That goal can be attained by various methods of killing specific trees. Have a goal, develop a plan, and use whichever method makes the most sense to work towards that goal.

Conservation Education



Morels Mushrooms & Walking Sticks

Tuesday, May 10th, 6:30 p.m.
Schaben Park, Dunlap

We'll decorate walking sticks (I'll supply the materials—you bring a freshly cut walking stick). Then we'll hit the woodlands to look for morel mushrooms—take home what you find! Also, learn about other edible mushrooms that can be found around here and poisonous ones to avoid. Meet at the shelter. No cost or registration.

Cancelled if heavy rain.



Dutch Oven Cooking

Tuesday, August 16th, 6 p.m.
Willow Lake Recreation Area, Woodbine

If you've wanted to learn cast iron or Dutch oven cooking, this is the program for you! We'll look at different cooking equipment, styles, and make some easy recipes for your next outdoor adventure!

No cost, but please register by Friday, August 12th at 712-647-2785.

If heavy rain, program will be held the next evening.



It is with sad news we announce that due to very low numbers over the last few years, the Kid's Fishing Day will no longer be held at Willow Lake. Special thanks to the Woodbine Kiwanis for partnering with HCCB since 1982 to offer this event. Naturalist Connie Betts will be at the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar near Onawa. Learn more about this exciting event held June 3rd-5th at loesshillsprairieseminar.com.

**HARRISON
COUNTY**

Parade & Fair Booth

Harrison County Fair Parade & Booth

Saturday, July 23rd — Missouri Valley Fairgrounds

Watch for us in the parade and then stop by our booth at Groom's Hall from Noon-4 p.m.

Save the Date!

**CREEPY CAMPGROUND
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8TH, 3-5 P.M.**



Harrison County Historical Village & Iowa Welcome Center

UPDATES

By Kathy Dirks, Welcome Center Program Manager

This past winter, staff members Kristin Leon and Larry Oliver hung the beautiful Harrison County Veteran's Honor Quilt made by Bette Jensen of Woodbine. For \$20, Harrison County Veterans names may be added to the back of the quilt with all proceeds going towards future maintenance of the Harrison County Freedom Rock. Name tapes include the rank, name of veteran, branch of service, and years served. If you are interested in adding the name of a veteran, please stop at the welcome center during our open hours to fill out a short form or give us a call and the form may be mailed to you. Certificates of Appreciation are available if you would like to gift being listed on the quilt for a birthday, holiday, or just because. Names on the front of the quilt depicted in the photo, are those honored on the Harrison County Freedom Rock-Sergeant First Class Clifford Totten of Missouri Valley, Nurse Cadet Zola Leonard of Woodbine, and Lt. Col. Hans Hansen of Logan.

The 13th season of the Welcome Center Farmers Market will begin on Thursday, May 12th. Open hours for the market will remain the same as in the past-3:30 to 6:30 pm. Many of your favorite vendors along with a couple new ones will be sharing their home-grown, hand-made, and hand-crafted items. We will be starting a new activity, POP (Power of Produce) Club for kids that will be held six times during the market. POP Club will seek to teach children about fruits and vegetables, local food systems and healthy food preparation through trying new foods, having conversations with farmers, and buying local produce. Watch for

more details about POP Club via our Facebook page closer to the start of the market season.

With the pandemic continuing throughout 2021, we weren't sure what to expect for travelers. Imagine our surprise when visitation was almost back to pre-covid levels! While international travelers were extremely limited, we had visitors from almost all 50 states. That said, it's been our Iowa/Nebraska and faithful Harrison County visitors that has been our greatest support. We couldn't do it without you!



To provide staff additional time to clean and sanitize our buildings on a daily basis, we are closing one hour early. For further information, please check our Facebook page "Harrison County Iowa Welcome Center" or give us a call at 712-642-2114.

Welcome Center Specialists

Kristen Leon, Kristine Underwood, Rhonda Kouma, and Roxanne Westphalen

Harrison County Village / Iowa Welcome Center

20% OFF

Gift Shop/Iowa Products Store

Not to be combined with other discounts!

(Excludes Iowa Wines, Loess Hills Lavender Products & Iowa Food Products)

Harrison County Historical Village &
Iowa Welcome Center
2931 Monroe Avenue
Missouri Valley, Iowa 51555
712-642-2114

welcome@HarrisonCountyParks.org

Current Hours due to COVID:
Hours 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Saturday
12-4 p.m. on Sunday

Historical Village open April-November



Nate Epperson of Missouri Valley is our newest board member. He works for the Iowa DOT and lives with his wife Sarah and their two children on a hobby farm. He enjoys hunting, fishing, road trips, and hanging out with friends. *Welcome Nate!*

HCCB would also like to thank Pete Ryerson for his years of service.

Congratulations to HCCB's Giving Tuesday raffle winner Irene Kuhlman of Woodbine!

Find Us!

HARRISON COUNTY PARKS.ORG

FACEBOOK

INSTAGRAM

Nate Christensen of Missouri Valley—Constructing a GaGa Ball pit at Willow Lake for his Eagle boy scout project.

Marr family—Donation of memorial bench at Scotch Pine cabin for Eileen “Neen” Marr.

Center for Nutrition—Donation of office furniture for new nature center since they closed their offices (and Danelle Myer for the contact).

Ben McIntosh—Donation of file cabinets.

Forrest and Waunita Johnson—Donating big pine cones for programs.

Thank you



2022 BOARD MEMBERS

- Kris Pauley**, *President*, Woodbine
- Danelle Myer**, *Vice President*, Logan
- Kim Nunez**, *Secretary*, Mondamin
- Ben McIntosh**, Missouri Valley
- Nate Epperson**, Missouri Valley

Contact:

- hccb@harrisoncountyparks.org
- www.HarrisonCountyParks.org
- www.MyCountyParks.com

STAFF

- Scott Nelson**, *Director*
- Laura Hansen**, *Administrative Assistant*
- Mike Weis**, *Operations Supervisor/Park Ranger*
- Byron Vennink**, *Operations Technician/Park Ranger*
- Thad Pothast**, *Natural Resource Technician/Weed Commissioner*
- Jonah Quick**, *Conservation Technician*
- Connie Betts**, *Naturalist/Public Relations Specialist*
- Kathy Dirks**, *Welcome Center Program Manager*
- Larry Oliver**, *Welcome Center Resource Technician*

Like our Facebook page for pop-up programs or hikes!



@HarrisonCountyConservation

Headquarters Office
Willow Lake Recreation Area
2725 Easton Trail,
Woodbine, IA 51579
712-647-2785
Mon-Fri 8 am to 4:30 pm
Closed Holidays



Discover. Learn. Enjoy.

VISION: To provide, develop and maintain facilities and programs that will enable county residents and visitors to understand, appreciate and enjoy Harrison County's natural environment and encourage them to preserve it.