

Iowa County Conservation Board

August 12, 2026 ICCB Minutes

Lake Iowa Nature Center, Ladora IA

Board members in attendance: Parsons, Danaher, Montross and Phillips

Board members absent: Schumacher

Staff in attendance: Slings, Minnich, Trickett and Wuebker

Part-time staff in attendance: McMullin

Public in attendance: None

Call to Order: at 6:30 by Montross

1) Pledge of Allegiance

2) Approve Agenda - Motion for approval Montross, seconded by Phillips. Motion carried.

3) Open Forum

A) Public Comment - Discussion was held regarding what the Board would like to see from County Conservation in the coming years and the overall direction of the department. Board members discussed continued invasive species control, particularly autumn olive, and the importance of following up on treated areas so improvements can be maintained. The Board also discussed keeping parks clean, usable and approachable while continuing conservation and environmental education efforts.

The Board discussed reviewing previous five-year plans and other planning documents. Members suggested continuing the discussion at future meetings so each Board member has an opportunity to share priorities and a clearer long-term vision can be documented.

B) Board Comment - A Board member shared positive feedback from a member of the public who recently visited Lake Iowa Park with her son and reported having a great experience.

4) Approval of Minutes from the July 15, 2026 meeting - Motion for approval by Parsons, seconded by Montross. Motion carried unanimously.

5) Approval of July 2026 Bills - Motion for approval by Montross, seconded by Parsons. Motion carried unanimously.

6) Staff Updates:

a. Blair - In July I engaged with the public at the nature center, our parks, and through our social media. I fed and cleaned the enclosures of our education animals. I attended staff meetings, and the FICCF monthly meeting. I developed lessons for summer camp and take-home kit programs. I set up, did activities with, and cleaned up summer camps programs. July public programs (Open Nature Center Saturdays, Bat Box Workshop, Astronomy, Victor Library program, REA Inc program, and summer camp program statistics are as follows 277 youth and 102 adults. Emma Edelen, our Summer Naturalist, continued to assist with planning and presenting programs, program PR, caring for education animals, and developing school program lessons

b. Trickett - I hope everyone has had a wonderful summer so far! Over the past month, we have completed painting all the park shelters and posts, giving the park a fresh, uniform appearance while enhancing its overall aesthetics. Mary and I attended Kinder Day in Amana, where we provided environmental education using our ornate box turtle and brown snake. In addition to educational programming, we promoted Iowa County Conservation by distributing flyers for upcoming events, sharing information about current park projects, and providing visitors with information on how to visit and contact us. We interacted with more than 200 people throughout the event. With the large number of tourists that Amana attracts, Kinder Day proved to be an excellent opportunity to increase awareness of Iowa County Conservation and the services we provide. We also attended the monthly Friends of Iowa County Conservation meeting, where we discussed the Gateway Boat Ramp project and other ongoing work throughout the park. It was also a great opportunity to introduce myself to the group and begin building relationships with its members. As a team, we completed widening the park trails from approximately 5–6 feet to 10–12 feet. This improvement provides visitors with a

more comfortable walking experience while reducing the encroachment of woody vegetation along the trail corridors. Planning has also begun for this year's Creepy Camping event. One of our first steps was reaching out to Bailey Dickey, owner of the Dickey Chick Stand in Marengo, to secure approximately 200 pumpkins for the event. Finally, we completed maintenance on the fishing jetties around the lake for another round, ensuring safe and convenient access to some of the lake's most popular fishing locations.

c. Wuebker – As we round out our summer months and prep for our last major holiday, we are foreshadowing fall/winter goals in our wild areas. Preparations include creating a list of areas we will be implementing herbicide application on honeysuckle, burn breaks & plans, brush clearings on other intricate restoration areas as well as prepping equipment for burn season. Follow up herbicide treatment will be used in areas already treated to combat target species not present during the first round of application. We have also worked on removing trees that coincide with our management goals for prairie/woodland restoration work. Bring on fall!

d. Minnich – This month I continued my regular administrative duties, including processing claims, preparing deposits, paying hotel/motel taxes, answering phone calls, and scheduling reservations. I also organized office files, held a macramé workshop, and have been working on planning additional educational programs.

7) Business

i. Lake Iowa Park -

a. Work around the park: Slings reported on a creek crossing repair, tree removal, seasonal training, directional signage and work to refresh the natural playscape. The creek crossing was excavated and stabilized with heavy fabric and rock. Secondary Roads assisted with work at the boat ramp using heavier equipment to remove accumulated material. Directional signage was also adjusted to help reduce confusion for visitors. Usable logs from dead and fallen trees are being saved and milled for park projects, including improvements to the natural playscape.

b. Discussion-HVAC Work- The distributor sent the wrong replacement part for the HVAC system. The correct part has been ordered and is expected in approximately three to four weeks. The unit serving the meeting room and bathrooms and the basement unit remain functional; however, the main room and offices are currently without air conditioning.

c. Discussion/Action-HF 2490 – Designate place of public posting- The Board discussed locations for official public postings, including the Nature Center, the county website and the courthouse. They decided that posting to the Nature Center and Website would be sufficient.

d. Discussion-Creepy Camping 2026 Planning- Planning has begun for Creepy Camping; the board discussed different activities. Staff would like to develop a larger selection of activities that can rotate from year to year and begin planning earlier to allow additional time for volunteers and supplies. The Board also discussed allowing churches, businesses and other organizations to participate by handing out candy, provided park policies are followed and nothing is sold.

e. Discussion-Firewood Permitting- Staff discussed the possibility of establishing a firewood permit program using material generated through tree removal and other park management work. Downed material could be staged in a designated area for permit holders to cut during approved times. The Board discussed possible permit costs, how similar programs operate in other counties, supervision and preventing resale of firewood. Staff will continue exploring the program.

f. Lake Iowa Master Level Planning this winter-input/discussion- Staff reported that master planning assistance may be available through a scholarship opportunity for a service normally costing approximately \$10,000. The Board discussed potential priorities including campground improvements, additional water hydrants, park amenities, environmental education, interpretation, natural-resource information and park history. Ideas included educational information at campsites, restrooms, trails and other high-use areas, as well as rotating information and QR codes.

g. Patron Reimbursement- The Board discussed a recent campground electrical issue in which a patron's surge protector was damaged. A similar electrical issue had occurred approximately two weeks earlier. Discussion was held regarding evaluating the electrical system and adding language to park rules and regulations addressing responsibility for damage to campers and personal property, including possible hold-harmless language.

ii. Gateway Park & Preserve -

a. Project updates- Slings provided an update on work at Gateway Park & Preserve and upcoming project activity.

b. Pre Construction Meeting Scheduled- A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for August 19 with project representatives and Miller Excavating. The group will meet at the building and then walk the project site to address questions before construction begins.

c. River Access Plan for the Future- Slings presented recent improvements to the river access. Secondary Roads assisted by removing accumulated material and improving access. The Board discussed continuing this maintenance when river conditions allow and considering longer-term improvements in future planning. The Board also discussed recognizing Secondary Roads for its assistance with this and other Conservation projects.

8) Next Meeting September 9th at 6:30pm at The Lake Iowa Nature Center

9) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Montross, seconded by Phillips. Motion carried unanimously.