

Iowa County Conservation Board

July 15, 2026 ICCB Minutes

Lake Iowa Nature Center, Ladora IA

Board members in attendance: Parsons, Montross and Schumacher (via phone at 6:39)

Board members absent: Danaher and Phillips

Staff in attendance: Slings, Minnich, Trickett and Wuebker

Public in attendance: Steve Fisher and Anthony Fisher

Call to Order: at 6:39 by Montross

1) Pledge of Allegiance

2) Approve Agenda - Motion for approval by Montross, seconded by Schumacher, all voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

3) Open Forum

A) Public Comment - Anthony Fisher of North English Scout Troop 227 presented a proposed Eagle Scout project. The project would add four live-edge wooden benches at Lake Iowa Park. Iowa County Conservation would provide the wood, and the benches would be constructed primarily with wooden dowels rather than metal hardware. The board expressed support for the project, and staff will work with Fisher to finalize the design and plan.

B) Board Comment - None noted.

4) Approval of Minutes from the June 10, 2026 meeting - Motion for approval by Montross, seconded by Schumacher, all voted aye. Motion passed unanimously.

5) Approval of June 2026 Bills - Motion for approval by Parsons seconded by Schumacher, all voted aye. Motion passed unanimously.

6) Staff Updates:

a. Blair - In June 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 weekly 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 from summer camps programs. June public programs (Open Nature Center Saturdays, Paddling, Amana Library program) and summer camp program statistics are as follows **167 youth and 156 adults**. A lot of time was spent preparing for the 2026 Iowa County Outdoor Adventure event. Planning, preparing supplies, setting up stations, communicating with volunteers, staffing the day of the event, and cleaning up from the event. We had **161 participants** come to this year's ICOA. Emma Edelen our Summer Naturalist started in early June and has been assisting with planning and presenting programs, program PR, caring for education animals, and developing a park wide scavenger hunt for this summer.

b. Trickett - I hope everyone had a wonderful Fourth of July and enjoyed celebrating America's 250th birthday. During the past month, I attended a CPR and Stop the Bleed certification course in Marengo, renewing both certifications for another two years. Our Outdoor Adventure weekend was a great success, with strong participation from individuals and families of all ages. I patrolled the campground throughout the weekend and had the opportunity to talk with many of the participants. The most frequently mentioned favorite activities included canoeing, archery, atlatl, and .22 shooting, showing that the event offered something for everyone. Campground occupancy peaked at 54 campers over the weekend, and we experienced no significant issues. As a department, we attended the District 6 meeting in Buchanan County. It was a valuable opportunity to network with staff from other county conservation boards, exchange ideas, discuss successful management practices and challenges, and bring back new knowledge that can help improve our own parks and properties. In partnership with the Iowa DNR, we assisted with goose banding at the beach, where 46 geese were banded. Maintenance efforts continued throughout the parks. At Gateway Park, I sprayed willows and sumac to improve the appearance of the area in preparation for Marengo's Third of July fireworks celebration. Our team also trimmed woody encroachment, primarily autumn olive, along park trails at Lake Iowa to improve accessibility and visitor experience. A second round of herbicide applications was completed around campground pads, posts, and parking areas to help maintain the grounds. We have also begun repainting park shelters, giving them a fresh appearance and helping

preserve these facilities for future use. Finally, I'm pleased to report that we have now had four consecutive weeks of acceptable E. coli levels at the beach. We encourage everyone to come out and enjoy the park and swimming area this summer.

c. Wuebker - I have successfully completed around 51 acres of herbicide application on invasives within the park. Species treated were sumac, autumn olive, honeysuckle, ash, crown vetch & lespedeza. We have cut back trails within the interior of the park to help for patrons utilizing the trails as well as make it easier to mow. I have completed roughly 3 acres of brush cutting on peripheral edges within the park campgrounds and plan to continue that once I free up more time in between herbicide applications. We were fortunate enough to team up with the Iowa DNR to conduct goose banding efforts at Lake Iowa to aide in their research quota goal. We completed a timber inspection with Mark V. (Iowa DNR Forester) at the Simmons property. As a team we worked for a week at Gateway to prep for the upcoming 4th of July fireworks staging areas, completed invasive species removal & herbicide application to trails. Throughout the rest of the summer months I plan to continue herbicide applications throughout the park in core restoration areas before we transition to fall burns & winter preparation to put us much closer to our management goals we have set out for our core restoration areas. Hope everyone had a great 4th and has a great rest of July.

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, assisted with weeding around the nature center area, helped paint a park shelter, created a new section on the county website for Conservation Board agendas and meeting minutes, resolved an issue preventing the office printer from scanning documents to staff computers, and continued updating information and photos on the MyCountyParks website.

7) Business

i. Lake Iowa Park - Work around the park:

- a.** Goose banding was completed with the Iowa DNR. Forty-six geese were captured and banded to assist with statewide population estimates.
 - b.** Timber harvest inspections were completed at Simmons, Gunderson, Big Bend and Lake Iowa. A report was generated and will be placed on a future agenda for discussion.
 - c.** The pollinator bed near the Nature Center will be replaced. Existing desirable plants may be removed before the area is treated and reseeded with a lower-maintenance planting similar to the bed across the sidewalk.
 - d.** Wuebker reported spraying slightly more than 50 acres since the previous meeting. Treatment has focused on autumn olive, ash, sumac, lespedeza and other invasive species. Wuebker has been using OnX to track treated areas and reported positive results.
 - e.** Shelter painting is nearly complete, with Shelter 5 remaining. Staff will then continue painting signs and other park features as needed.
 - f.** Campground and cabin revenue finished approximately \$48,000 above the prior comparison discussed. The department met its budgeted revenue goal, and donations increased in connection with the Gateway improvement project. The board discussed the positive effect of park maintenance, clean facilities and infrastructure improvements on visitor experience.
 - g.** Scientific studies are underway on county conservation properties, including a bee atlas survey for the rusty patched bumble bee and research involving remnant prairie areas and carbon sequestration. Researcher identified several areas at Lake Iowa that appear never to have been farmed.
 - h.** HVAC work at the Nature Center is continuing.
 - i.** The 2026 Outdoor Adventures event had 161 participants despite rain ending portions of the event early. The 2027 event is planned for June 12.
 - j.** Pickup purchase - Slings reviewed bids for a new one-ton, single-cab fleet pickup approved in the budget. Bids were approximately \$49,200 from Capper, \$49,800 from Thys and \$51,714.25 from Karl Chevrolet.
- Motion by Montross, seconded by Parsons, to purchase the pickup from Capper. All voted aye.**

Motion carried unanimously. The existing pickup will likely be traded in unless another option is determined to be more beneficial.

- k. Slings reported on legislative outreach related to the Iowa Water and Land Legacy trust. He was selected as an alternate to attend Congress through the committee and is arranging meetings with legislators to discuss conservation funding.
- l. Furniture for the south residence was purchased and will be moved into the house. Staff plan to remove the existing flooring, and volunteer Richard Wessels offered to assist with vinyl plank installation.
- m. The board discussed e-bikes and e-scooters in the campground, particularly visibility and safety near dusk and after dark. Staff have been asking riders to return to their campsites before quiet hours. The board discussed applying existing bicycle lighting and reflector requirements, encouraging bicycle etiquette and reviewing how other jurisdictions handle the issue. Staff will continue monitoring the situation and may bring recommendations back at a later date.

ii. Gateway Park & Preserve:

- a. Project addendum No. 2 was discussed. The addendum concerns resident project representative services to verify materials and quantities during construction. A cap of approximately \$18,700 was discussed; staff plan to request that the representative primarily be present on concrete-pouring dates to reduce costs.
- b. Staff completed a work week at Gateway from June 22-25 before the Marengo fireworks show. Work included removing unwanted or encroaching trees, improving visibility, addressing potholes and clearing views from the levee trail.
- c. The board discussed motorized vehicles using undesignated trails. Slings plans to add signs, pylons, rocks or bollards where needed to keep vehicles off the approximately eight-foot-wide nonmotorized trail.
- d. A reported temporary camp near the North Pit was investigated. Staff found no one present, and the tent and backpack were gone when they returned.
- e. The DNR recently conducted fish sampling at Gateway using nets. The board discussed the possibility of staff or board members observing future electrofishing or netting activities.
- f. The board discussed boat access during the July 3 fireworks event. The South Pit was closed within the fireworks safety zone, and concerns were raised about maintaining access to the North Pit and river. Staff will verify the required safety radius for future events.
- g. The existing river access ramp was discussed. Staff explained that the ramp should be rotated from facing north to northwest so river current can reduce sediment deposition. The improvement may qualify for the same grant program being used for the Gateway South Pit project.
- h. Taxidermy mounts donated by the family of Tim Hollopeter were installed in the Nature Center, including turkey, deer and fish mounts.

8) Next Meeting: August 12th, 2026 at the Lake Iowa Nature Center at 6:30 PM

9) Adjournment - Motion made by Montross and seconded by Schumacher to adjourn July 15, 2026 at 7:18 PM
Motion approved.