

Des Moines County Conservation is dedicated to the sustainability of natural resources through land stewardship, conservation education, and by providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities.

FY23/24 Highlights

Annual Report Highlights

Fiscal year 2024 was certainly one of the busiest years in recent memory. Here are some of the key highlights:

In the fall of 2023, we cut the ribbon on **19.4 acres of new land added to Hickory Bend Conservation Area.** Purchased completely with grants and donations, the "Shanstrom Addition" consists of bottomland hardwood timber right along Flint Creek at the south end of Hickory Bend. The property supports many species of wildlife including threatened and endangered species of bats.

Following the retirement of 33-year department veteran Pat "Rock-n-Roll Ranger" Rogge, we converted the **Park Ranger residence** at Big Hollow into a **public rental cabin.** The 3-bedroom 2-bathroom "Ranger House" is now available for friends and families to rent for a memorable getaway to one of the region's best outdoor recreation destinations.

In the spring of 2024, we completed **renovations to Starr's Cave Nature Center** and **moved our Administration Office** from West Burlington to newly constructed office spaces inside the Nature Center.



Ranger Cabin



Concrete Site

Guided by the Park Master Plan, we added 18 new campsites at Big Hollow just west of the existing RV campground. Five of the sites are arranged in a circle for group camping. We also added paved walkways around the beach and connected them to paved handicap parking sites with a paved trail. We also paved three of the existing RV sites and added paved walkways at the fishing jetty and kayak launch below the campground. The \$300,000+ worth of improvements were funded completely with grants and donations from the community.

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve water quality in Big Hollow Lake, we built **two new sediment ponds** west of the campground to capture runoff that was previously entering the lake. The ponds were 90% paid for with funds from a state Fish Habitat Grant.



The Partners for Conservation Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supports conservation and outdoor recreation



One of two new sediment pond

programs in Des Moines County, hosted the inaugural "I Heart County Parks Banquet" in April. The now-annual event raises money for our parks and programs through the Foundation.

And finally, we created a **Community Outdoor Recreation Education Specialist** (CORES) position within our Environmental Education division to better connect citizens to the great organizations and outdoor recreation amenities we have in our county. The majority of the pilot program was funded by a grant from the local Kiwanis club.

Staff Update

In August 2023, Pat "Rock-n-Roll Ranger" Rogge retired after 33 years of service to Des Moines County Conservation. After many years as the department's Park Ranger, Pat spent the last few years as the Operations Supervisor.

Park Technician **Tanner Grimm** was promoted to take Pat's place as Operations Supervisor.

Part-time Technicians Cade Roland and Derek Hester were promoted to full time Technicians to fill the vacancies created by Grimm's promotion and Park Ranger Ryan Roth's departure in September.

Bryce Wade and Brian Havener were then hired to replace Roland and Hester as the part time Technicians.

Aron Kehoe, a teacher at Burlington High School was selected as the Community Outdoor Recreation Education Specialist for the summer of 2024.

Angela Berndt joined the Environmental Education team for a summer internship. Interns with the Outdoor Recreation division this year were Trenton Gebhardt, returning for his fourth summer internship, and Grant Swanson who returned for his second.



Pat Rogge



Aron Kehoe

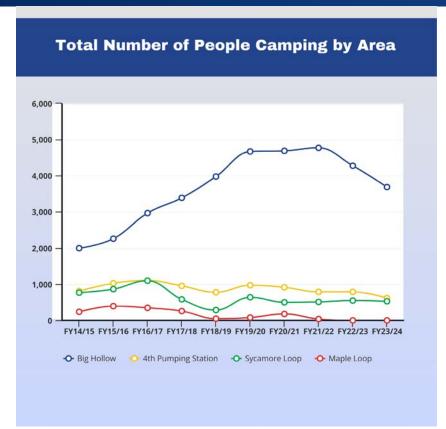


Angela Berndt

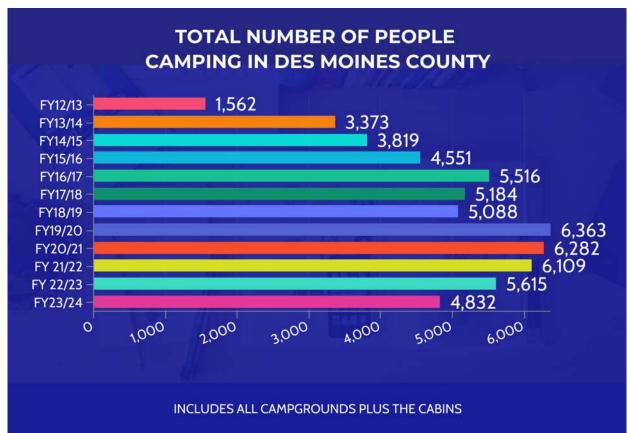
We hosted an **Americarps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)** team in the fall. Among other things, the 7-person team painted the Ranger House cabin, cut invasive species, and learned about prescribed fire.

Frank Boyer, the Big Hollow Watershed Coordinator left his position in the spring. The Soil and Water Conservation District chose **Tom Brockett**, a neighbor of Big Hollow and champion of sustainable farming, to assume the role.

On the Conservation Board, **Dan Hockett** was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to replace Matt Haas who chose not to seek a second term.







Outdoor Recreation

Annual Report July 2023 to June 2024 John H. Witte, Jr. Observatory Complex

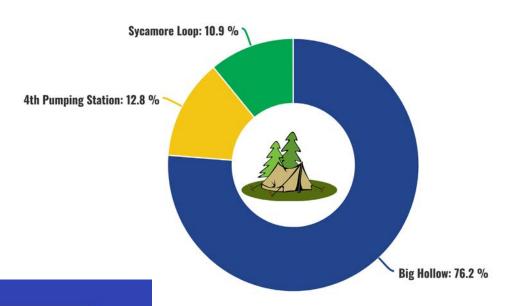
- Open 41 times for 747 public visitors,
 628 hours of Volunteer time.
- Open 30 hours of telescope training and member only use.
- Preparation for Public Viewing: 100 hours of Volunteer time.
- Maintenance on Witte Observatory Complex: 60 Volunteer hours.

Total Volunteer Hours for the John H. Witte Observatory Complex = 715 Hours.

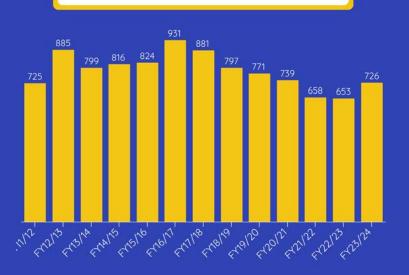


Where Are People Camping?

Based on total nights, FY23/24



Shooting Range Membership *Based on paid renewals



Trails				
Park / Area	Miles of off-road Trails			
Big Hollow	10.3			
Flint River Trail	8.2			
Hunt Woods	2.3			
Luckenbill Woods	2.2			
North Gorge Trail	1.5			
Starr's Cave	3.7			
Total: 28.2 miles				

Big Hollow Recreation Area

18853 152nd Ave, Sperry



















Leopold Recreation Area 11816 Mill Dam Rd, Burlington 235 Acres



Starr's Cave

Nature Center & Preserve 11627 Starr's Cave Rd, Burlington 184 acres



Hickory Bend Conservation Area 16256 155th Ave, Sperry



Welter Recreation Area

16839 Skunk River Rd, Burlington

















Luckenbill Woods 8795 Hawkeye Rd, Mediapolis

76 acres



Hunt Woods 12412 65th St, Burlington 58 acres











Kevin J Gahn Memorial Recreation Area

13724 Washington Rd, Burlington 56 acres, Public access is limited







FEMA Buyout Properties

57 Parcels, No public Access

102 acres

Sullivan Slough River Access

3175 Sullivan Slough Rd, Burlington



4th Pumping Plant Recreation

2073 Pumping Station Rd, Oakville 17 acres

















Chautauqua Roadside Park 10530 Mediapolis Rd, Mediapolis

Hawkeye Dolbee River Access 4629 Lake Rd, Oakville

10 acres









13518 Tama Rd, Burlington 3 acres









Casey Barrow River Access 1867 180th St, Burlington

2 acres













Edgewater Beach River Access

13290 Tama Rd, Burlington 1 acre





Zion School

16495 155th Ave, Sperry 1 acre



North Gorge Trail

9668 Golf Course Rd, Burlington 36 acres





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Harold and Mildred Linder Conservation Area

3807 170th St, Sperry 105 acres













Hunting



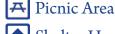
Mississippi River Access



Swimming



■ Boat Access



↑ Shelter Houses



Bump Station



• Restrooms



| Hiking



Bike Trails

Electrical Hook-Ups



Water

Land Stewardship

LAND STEWARDSHIP

More than ever before, Des Moines County Conservation has been striving to manage its forested acres, specifically at Big Hollow but in other parks also. This year, staff and volunteers applied more prescribed fire to forested lands throughout the park system. The goal with these fires is to reduce the prevalence of invasive species, manage for native species such as oaks and hickories, and improve habitat for many species, including the endangered Indiana bat.

Private Land

- 24.78 acres of native grasses / pollinators planted
- 1.5 acres of prairie burned

Public Land

- 8.31 acres of food plots planted
- 18.3 acres of timber stand improvement (TSI)
- 28.81 acres of prairie burned
- 32.3 acres of timber burned





ENVIRONMENTAL/CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAM Activities of the EE Program Staff JULY 2022 – JUNE 2023

Programs, Events, and Services

The Environmental Education Staff has had a very productive year. Our program output has fostered opportunities for community members to experience quality outdoor recreational activities. The variety of activities offered range from beginner level to expert. Our department has had several annual public programs like our Eagle Watch, Owl Prowls, Outdoor Youth Jamboree, Summer Celebration, Monarch Watch, Hike a Park series, Earth Day Clean Up, Youth Summer Camps, and hosting Hunter Education field days. Through these programs sustainability and land stewardship are promoted.

In addition to the annual programs, the department also implemented non-annual public programs such as Bike a Trail, Paddle in the Park, Bat programs, and a Night Creek Stomp to name a few. Bike a Trail encouraged community members to explore local trails through guided biking events, while Paddle in the Park engaged participants in canoeing and kayaking activities,



promoting outdoor recreation and environmental awareness. The Night Creek Stomp program aimed to explore nature at night and to disperse stigmas behind nature in the dark.

A significant development for the department was the addition of administrative offices. By bringing our Office Administrator and Director's offices to Starr's Cave we have strengthened staff bonds and have collaborated effectively on projects and efficiency. Not



only is the Conservation department functioning better, but we are also promoting sustainability through our actions. Our nature center is now able to stay open to the public for more hours each week, and in the case of sick days and vacation, coverage is manageable. This impacts the visitor most by allowing more opportunity or accessibility to environmentally based learning. This is reflected in our casual visitation numbers. An additional door count of 4,604 indicates the impact of our office consolidation and speaks volumes about our building usage.

The Environmental Education staff also played an active role in delivering more programming and organizing field trips. Students have been provided with more interactive learning experiences and fostering environmental literacy. Furthermore, the department made education kit rentals available to local schools, enabling teachers to incorporate hands-on environmental education into their classrooms and enhance the learning experience for students. As a result, the Program and Participant Analysis indicates this effort with 318 programs, an increase of programming by 24 programs with 1,006 more participants than the last fiscal year. We had an impressive number of participants in environmental education programming at 5,938 people.

Conservation Education

The department's commitment to building strong relationships with partners at PIECES, Kiwanis, Burlington City Parks, and surrounding conservation groups was evident. These partnerships were fostered and strengthened throughout the year, enhancing collaborative efforts in environmental education and conservation initiatives. By working together, the department and its partners were able to leverage their resources and expertise to create a more significant impact on the community.

Overall, the Environmental Education department's annual summary reflects a successful year of engaging the public, educating youth, and fostering environmental awareness. Through their diverse program offerings, dedicated staff, and collaborative partnerships, the department has made a positive impact on the community's understanding and appreciation of the natural world while promoting a sense of environmental stewardship.



Program and Participant Analysis						
	Progr	Programs Partic		oants		
Group	# of Programs	+/- change from previous FY	# of Participants	+/- change from previous FY		
Preschool – K	20	-18	398	-95		
1st – 2nd	47	-19	844	167		
3rd – 5th	47	29	907	440		
6th – 8th	2	-3	52	-50		
9th – 12th	7	-8	103	-30		
Homeschools	7	-3	134	-81		
Care Centers	7	4	79	52		
Youth Groups / After School	68	10	1160	105		
Civic Groups	2	-1	125	95		
Public	59	35	1,883	422		
Professional	4	0	99	38		
Hunter/Range Safety	1	0	12	-24		
Camps	47	-2	142	-33		
Totals	318	24	5,938	1,006		



Starr's Cave Nature Center Visitation

Type of visitation	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 22-23	FY 23-24
Attending a Program	3,252	5,706	6,116	5,116	5,000	5,121	1,423	214	4,993	5,916
Renting the Building	1,465	1,850	2,263	2,000	2,000	2,500	1,000	200	0	0
Casual Visitation	2,532	3,067	5,263	4,263	9,595	8,743	8,344	7,001	8,851	13,455
Totals	7,249	10,623	13,642	11,379	16,595	16,364	10,767	7,415	13,844	19,371

Volunteer Recognition

CHEERS TO OUR GREAT VOLUNTEERS!

At our annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner in August 2023, we recognized some of our great volunteers with the following awards:

Volunteer of the Year: George and Terri Van Hagen

In honor of their dedicated work at keeping our parks, trails, and areas clean with their park cleanup efforts as well as their volunteerism with several of our Environmental Education programs, George and Terri Van Hagen were selected as the Volunteers of the Year.

Volunteer Group of the Year: Des Moines County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

The CERT team was selected as Volunteer Group of the Year in honor of the many events they help us with, not the least of which is managing parking logistics at events like the Youth Jamboree and Big Holloween which annually attract several hundred visitors to Big Hollow Park.

Environmental Educators of the Year: Trevor Skalinski

High school student Trevor Skalinski has helped with the Outdoor Youth Jamboree, weekend events, and many other Environmental Education programs throughout the year. He's a regular fixture at the nature center and our many programs and is a reliable go-to with everything he helps with.





Outstanding Service Award: Kevin Moore

From Starr's Cave Nature Center to Zion School, Kevin Moore's signature handiwork is evident across many of our facilities. He is a founding member of the Friends of Des Moines County Conservation group which was formed to preserve Zion Schoolhouse. Leading the group that secured the funds and did the hard work to replace the roof on the historic structure, Kevin preserved a piece of history that we simply couldn't.

watch the videos!

Outstanding Service Award: Cathy Ziglar

In addition to serving as a board member, Cathy went above and beyond her duties and secured multiple grants over the past year. One helped put the roof on the Zion Schoolhouse, the other allowed us, through field work that Cathy did herself, to continue our research on threatened and endangered species of bats. The results of that research have helped us make management decisions and secure additional land for wildlife.



Volunteers really are critical to our operations. They help with everything from field work, to youth programs, to department administration. Des Moines County Conservation appreciates all the volunteers that help us throughout the year, and we look forward to being able to recognize everyone in person at next year's volunteer recognition event.

You can watch the presentation videos on our YouTube Channel.

Scan this code to

Financial Statement

REAP Fund - Revenue				
Account		Revenues		
0023-2-22-6110-846067	REAP GRANTS-CONTR-EQUAL SHARE	7,776.00		
0023-2-22-6110-846067	REAP GRANTS-PER CAPITA	9,608.00		
0023-4-22-6110-600000	INTEREST ON INVESTMENTS	1,408.89		
Total - REAP Revenues		18,792.89		
	Conservation Reserve Fund - R	evenue		
Account		Revenues		
0027-0-22-0300-900000	TRANSFER FROM GENERAL BASIC FUND	481,234.00		
0027-1-22-6110-412000	BOAT TITLES	1,250.00		
0027-1-22-6110-441021	SHOOTING RANGE CERT-NEW	5,890.00		
0027-1-22-6110-441022	SHOOTING RANGE CERT-RENEWALS	14,355.00		
0027-1-22-6110-520000	CABIN RENTALS	5,835.00		
0027-1-22-6110-520031	CAMP FEES-SYCAMORE LOOP	6,007.00		
0027-1-22-6110-520038	CAMP FEES-BIG HOLLOW CREEK	67,152.00		
0027-1-22-6110-520039	CAMP FEES-4TH PUMPING STATION	11,777.00		
0027-1-22-6110-520041	CAMP FEES-MISC RELATED TO CAMP	13,549.00		
0027-1-22-6110-523047	REC FACILITY RENT-SHELTERS	320.00		
0027-1-22-6110-839062	SALE OF OTR COMM-TIMBER	6,292.00		
0027-1-22-6110-847000	MISC REIMB	4,735.89		
0027-1-22-6110-847064	MISC REIMB-PLANTING SERVICES	21,337.17		
0027-1-22-6120-529000	PROGRAM FEES	7,675.00		
0027-1-22-6120-810000	DONATION	241,394.98		
0027-2-22-6110-242000	FEMA	64,237.07		
0027-3-22-6110-265400	WILDLIFE HABITAT COST SHARE GRANT	17,857.29		
0027-3-22-6110-265900	WILDLIFE DIVERSITY GRANT	412.41		
0027-4-22-6110-920000	SALES OF GENERAL FIXED ASSETS	22,660.77		
Total - Conservation Re	serve Fund Revenues	993,976.08		

General Supplemental - Expense				
Account	Adjusted Appropriation	Expenditures	% Rem.	\$ Balance
0002-22-6100-000-11000 FICA	9,487.00	9,337.57	1.58	149.43
0002-22-6100-000-11100 IPERS	11,706.00	11,698.54	.06	7.46
0002-22-6100-000-11300 GROUP INSURANCE	27,713.88	27,813.26	36	-99.38
0002-22-6110-000-11000 FICA	21,966.00	17,742.39	19.23	4,223.61
0002-22-6110-000-11100 IPERS	23,753.00	19,047.04	19.81	4,705.96
0002-22-6110-000-11300 GROUP INSURANCE	55,427.76	51,465.40	7.15	3,962.36
0002-22-6120-000-11000 FICA	7,190.00	7,126.75	.88	63.25
0002-22-6120-000-11100 IPERS	8,872.00	9,002.79	-1.47	-130.79
0002-22-6120-000-11300 GROUP INSURANCE	27,713.88	26,662.50	3.79	1,051.38
Total - General Supplemental	193,829.52	179,896.24	7.19	13,933.28

Conservation Reserve Fund - Expense				
Account	Adjusted Appropriation	Expenditures	% Rem.	\$ Balance
0027-22-0220-000-24220 FEMA	25,280.00	0.00	100.00	25,280.00
0027-22-0220-000-60150 WILDLIFE DIVERSITY GRANT	880.00	887.13	.10	0.87
0027-22-0220-000-61050 STARRS CAVE NATURE CENTER	20,000.00	19,401.23	2.99	598.77
0027-22-0220-000-62010 PARKS/PERM. IMPROVEMENTS	65,738.00	65,737.27	0.00	0.73
0027-22-0220-000-62810 BHCRA/PERM. IMPROVEMENTS	339,000.00	220,331.41	35.01	118,668.59
0027-22-6100-000-10010 ADMINISTRATORS/EXEC DIRECTOR	72,606.00	72,571.47	0.05	34.53
0027-22-6100-000-10050 CORR OFF/P RNGR/OFC MGR/CIV ATTY	47,523.00	47,473.97	0.10	49.03
0027-22-6100-000-10200 LONGEVITY	3,880.00	3,880.00	0.00	0.00
0027-22-6100-000-26000 OFFICE SUPPLIES	1,000.00	855.78	14.42	144.22
0027-22-6100-000-26200 DATA PROCESSING SUPPLIES	1,500.00	1741.50	-16.10	-241.50
0027-22-6100-000-29400 WEARING APPAREL & UNIFORMS	2,000.00	2,966.34	-48.32	-966.34
0027-22-6100-000-40000 OFC PUBLICATIONS & LEGAL NOTICES	300.00	190.92	36.36	109.08
0027-22-6100-000-41200 POSTAGE & MAILING	200.00	32.94	83.53	167.06
0027-22-6100-000-41400 TELECOMMUNICATIONS SRVS	9,000.00	9,656.51	-7.29	-656.51
0027-22-6100-000-42210 SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION	6,000.00	7,343.60	-22.39	-1,343.60
0027-22-6100-000-44400 OFC & DATA P EQUIP REPR/MAINT	500.00	19.98	96.00	480.02
0027-22-6100-000-48000 DUES & MEMBERSHIPS	2,600.00	4,740.84	-82.34	-2,140.84
0027-22-6110-000-10020 DEPUTIES/ASSTS/INVESTI/FOREMAN	77,155.00	52,893.35	31.45	24,261.65
0027-22-6110-000-10030 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGER	43,896.00	43,994.58	-0.22	-98.58
0027-22-6110-000-10050 CORR OFF/P RNGR/CIV ATTY	49,194.00	12,936.24	73.7	36,257.76
0027-22-6110-000-10070 PARK TECHNICIANS	43,826.00	88,037.71	-100.88	-44,211.71
0027-22-6110-000-10100 TEMPORARY & PART TIME	68,900.00	33,890.00	50.81	35,010.00
0027-22-6110-000-10200 LONGEVITY	4,160.00	2,620.00	37.02	1,540.00
0027-22-6110-000-10400 OVERTIME & SHIFT PAY	0.00	418.19	0.00	-652.68
0027-22-6110-000-20200 CHEMICALS & GASES/HERBICIDES	1,500.00	418.19	72.12	1,081.81
0027-22-6110-000-20300 FERTILIZER & SEED	200.00	109.99	45.01	90.01
0027-22-6110-000-21210 PARKS - ROCK & SAND	4,000.00	2,452.94	38.68	1,547.06
0027-22-6110-000-21400 TRAFFIC & ST SIGN MATERIALS	1,283.00	2,780.98	-116.76	-1,497.98
0027-22-6110-000-21910 PARKS - ALL OTHER EXPENSES	36,000.00	46,734.13	-29.82	-10,734.13
0027-22-6110-000-23210 PARKS - CUSTODIAL	2,000.00	3,959.88	-97.99	-1,959.88
0027-22-6110-000-25000 FUELS	16,000.00	18,894.33	-18.09	-2,894.33
0027-22-6110-000-25100 LUBRICANTS	1,000.00	590.99	40.9	409.01
0027-22-6110-000-29000 MINOR EQUIPMENT & HAND TOOLS	1,000.00	2,432.01	-143.2	-1,432.01
0027-22-6110-000-29300 SAFETY & PROTECTIVE SUPPLIES	1,500.00	2,151.05	-43.4	-651.05
0027-22-6110-000-42212 LAW ENFORCEMENT SCHOOL OF INST	250.00	75.00	70.0	175.00
0027-22-6110-000-43000 NATURAL & LP GAS	7,200.00	4,024.71	44.1	3,175.29
0027-22-6110-000-43110 PARKS - ELECTRICITY	25,000.00	23,027.97	7.89	1,972.03

Conservation Reserve Fund - Expense - Continued				
Account	Adjusted Appropriation	Expenditures	% Rem.	\$ Balance
0027-22-6110-000-43200 WATER USE	4,800.00	4,753.49	0.09	46.51
0027-22-6110-000-44000 MOTOR VEH EQUIP REPAIR/MAINT	6,500.00	10,641.83	-63.72	-4,141.83
0027-22-6110-000-44300 OPER & CONSTR EQUIP REPAIR/MAINT	9,000.00	7,973.26	11.41	1,026.74
0027-22-6110-000-48320 CONTRACT MOWING	22,700.00	25,420.00	-11.98	-2,720.00
0027-22-6110-000-63700 SHOP EQUIPMENT	20,900.00	20,900.00	0.00	0.00
0027-22-6120-000-10070 NATURALIST/PARK TECH/RD BIOLGIS	52,440.00	52,392.04	0.09	47.96
0027-22-6120-000-10090 OTHER/LT	39,861.00	39,814.09	0.12	46.91
0027-22-6120-000-10100 TEMPORARY & PART TIME	12,600.00	1,885.00	85.04	10,715.00
0027-22-6120-000-10200 LONGEVITY	1,680.00	1,190.00	29.17	490.00
0027-22-6120-000-10400 OVERTIME & SHIFT PAY	0.00	88.05	0.00	-88.05
0027-22-6120-000-29700 EE PROGRAM SUPPLIES	5,000.00	5,147.84	-2.96	-147.84
0027-22-6120-000-42940 MARKETING SERVICES	2,400.00	1,932.09	19.5	467.91
Total - CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND EXPENSE	1,160,781.00	972,645.31	16.21	188,135.69

Line-of-Credit - Expense				
Account Adjusted Appropriation Expenditures % Rem.				\$ Balance
0017-22-0220-000-61020 CAPITAL PROJECTS	56,347.00	56,347.000	0.00	0.00
Total - Line of Credit	56,347.00	56,347.00	0.00	0.00



Staff Directory

Administration

Des Moines County Conservation

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Board Member Directory

Board Member Directory					
Position Name Term Expires					
Chair	Cathy Ziglar	12/31/2024			
Vice-Chair	James Garnjobst	12/31/2026			
Secretary / Treasurer	Julie Solinski	12/31/2025			
Member	Ron Helling	12/31/2027			
Member	Dan Hockett	12/31/2028			

Conservation Board Meetings

- July 5, 2023 RM
- August 2, 2023 RM
- August 29, 2023 WS
- September 5, 2023 RM
- September 12, 2023 WS
- October 4, 2023 RM
- October 24, 2023 SM
- November 1, 2023 RM
- December 6, 2023 RM

- January 3, 2024 RM
- February 7, 2024 RM
- March 6, 2024 RM
- April 3, 2024 RM
- May 1, 2024 RM
- June 5, 2023 RM

RM - Regular Meeting SM - Special Meeting WS - Work Session



