



STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD

July 22, 2011 – 10:00 AM
 State Forest Nursery
 2404 South Duff
 Ames, Iowa

---Agenda Topics---

Board members will tour Ames High Prairie and Doolittle Prairie State Preserves after the meeting. The field tour will leave from the State Forest Nursery at 1:30 PM. The public is welcome to attend.

1	Introduction of New Board Members	
2	Approve Agenda	Decision
3	Approve Minutes of April 2011 Meeting	Decision
4	Ames High Prairie - The Friends of Ames High Prairie and The Nature Conservancy have observed unsustainable deer browsing at Ames High Prairie over the last several years. In 2010, the Friends and Conservancy staff agreed that the 5 most urgent threats to the prairie were, in order of urgency, invasive herbaceous species, woody encroachment, lack of awareness, deer browsing, and small size/fragmentation. The City of Ames “Deer Task Force” has identified Ames High as a potential bow hunting site to control deer in Ames, however has not moved forward on implementing a bow hunt to date. In the event that the City and the School Board do come to an agreement and allow Ames High to become a bow hunting site, approval from the State Preserves Board will be necessary. The Volunteer 2010-2013 Work Plan was sent to board members for additional information about the preserve.	Decision (Jennifer Filipiak and Erv Klaas)
5	Ryerson’s Woods – The Parks and Recreation Department of Iowa City is nominating Ryerson’s Woods as a biological state preserve. It is a 49-acre, wooded tract of land bisected by a deep ravine. The park was established in 1985 after a committee that included Professors Lon Drake (University of Iowa, Department of Geology) and Jeffry Schabillion (UI, Department of Botany) recognized its value as a natural area. The site has been managed to minimize human impact and maintain its natural character. The nomination letter and maps were included for the board members to review.	Decision (Diana Horton)
6	Strategic Plan – A copy of the strategic plan was included in the agenda package for board members to review. The following items are proposed for discussion: what resources are most needed, uses of preserves, and how to improve public knowledge of the state preserve system.	Decision (Deb Lewis)
7	General Discussion	Deb Lewis
8	Next Meeting	Information



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
220 SOUTH GILBERT STREET

July 8, 2011

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Ms. Deborah Lewis, Chair
Iowa State Preserves Advisory Board
253 Bessey Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-1020

Dear Ms. Lewis:

The Iowa City Department of Parks and Recreation requests that the Iowa State Preserves Advisory Board consider my/our nomination of Ryerson's Woods Park for a biological state preserve.

Ownership and Location

Ryerson's Woods is owned and managed by the Iowa City Department of Parks and Recreation. It is located in Johnson County on the south side of Iowa City; 2.2 miles south of Highway 6 on South Riverside Drive, immediately south of the Johnson County 4-H Fairgrounds (see attached map and aerial photograph).

Current Management

Ryerson's Woods is a 49-acre, wooded tract of land that rises 40 to 50 feet above the floodplain of the Iowa River and is bisected by a deep ravine. The park was established in 1985 after a committee that included Professors Lon Drake (University of Iowa, Department of Geology) and Jeffry Schabillon (UI, Department of Botany) recognized its value as a natural area. The site has been managed to minimize human impact and maintain its natural character. There is a simple trail system consisting of two loops, a short one near the parking lot and a longer one through the upland with a viewing stand overlooking the main ravine and several simple benches set back from the trail. Deadfall is removed from the trail, but otherwise left in situ to recycle. There is a doggie bag dispenser at the entrance to the park and refuse containers at the parking lot are emptied regularly.

Rationale for Preserve Status

The basis for our nomination of Ryerson's Woods is an intensive analysis of the vegetation by Diana Horton (University of Iowa, Department of Biology) and Sophia Krajewski (University of Iowa, Honor's B.S., 2010), conducted in 2009-2011. This site supports a total of 206 plant species, with 185 vascular plants (95% native) and 21 species of bryophytes (18 mosses, 3 hepatics; 100% native). There are more than 10 rare/infrequent species, including Wild Sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*) and Spikenard (*A. racemosa*), Purple Cress (*Cardamine douglassii*), two sedges, *Carex jamesii* and *C. tenera*, Spinulose Fern (*Dryopteris spinulosa*), Purple Rocket (*Iodanthus pinnatifidus*), Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), Grape Honeysuckle (*Lonicera reticulata*), Sandwort (*Moehringia lateriflora*) and Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*).

The ravine is remarkably pristine and supports extensive colonies of Wild Sarsaparilla and Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), patches of Interrupted Fern (*Osmunda claytonii*), and exceptionally large plants (6' tall) of Spikenard. Both the upland, though disturbed, and the ravine support a spectacular spring flora (see attached photographs) with abundant Large-flowered Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*), and carpets of Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*) and Trout Lily (*Erythronium albidum*). Soils data indicate development under deciduous forest in both the ravine and upland, and the earliest aerial photographs reveal that the park was wooded. The General Land Office surveys for the four townships (144 mi²) surrounding the Ryerson's Woods site reveal an 1830s landscape dominated by treeless prairie in the uplands (at higher elevations than Ryerson's Woods) and dense trees on the floodplain, while ravines likely were wooded. The ravine in Ryerson's Woods surely is a woodland relict, and the upland likely was wooded as well.

Incorporation of Ryerson's Woods into the state preserves system would add a high-quality wooded ravine site to the one biological preserve in Johnson County (data from Guide to Iowa's State Preserves by Ruth Herzberg and John Pearson), Williams Prairie, which is a wet prairie, and to the adjoining counties (Linn, Cedar, Muscatine, Louisa, Washington, Iowa and Benton), where there are seven biological preserves, but only two (Hanging Bog and Palisades-Dows), both in Linn County, are woodlands.

I appreciate the State Preserves Advisory Board's consideration of our proposal.

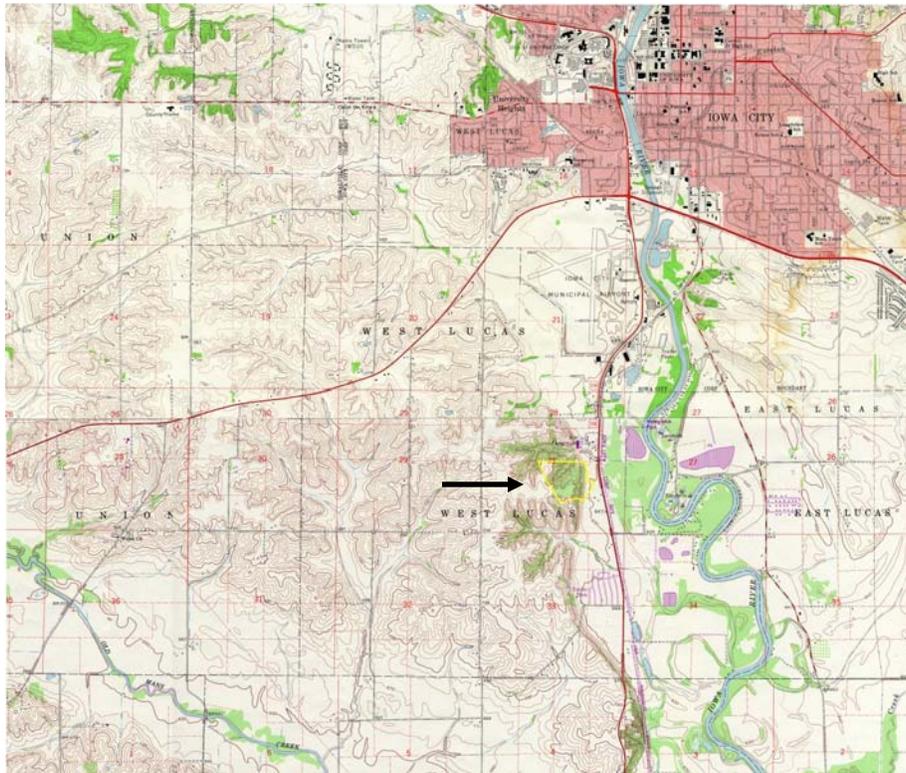
Sincerely,

Michael E. Moran, Director
Iowa City Parks and Recreation

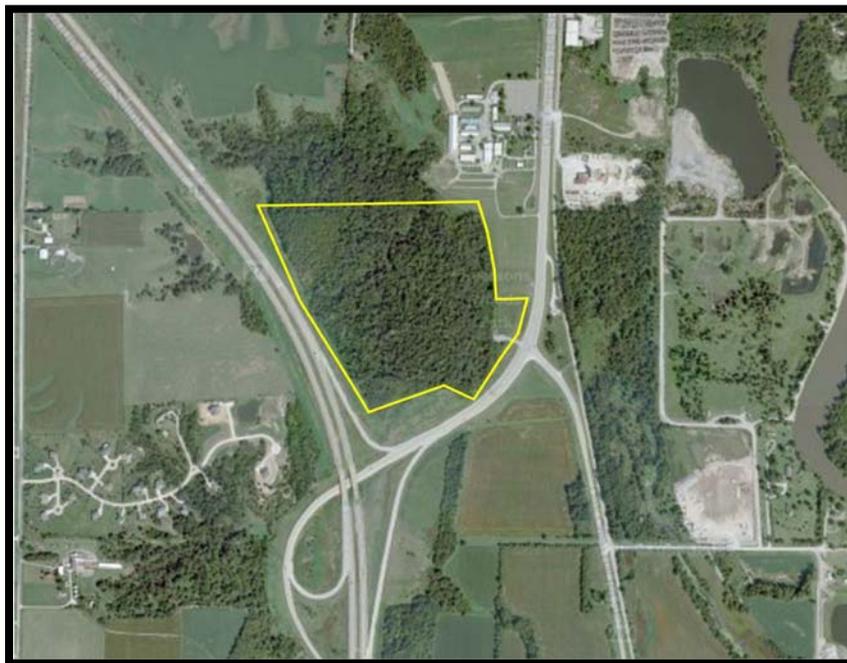
Copies:

Dr. John Pearson, Botanist/Ecologist
Conservation & Recreation Division
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Des Moines, IA 50319-0034

Dr. Diana Horton, Associate Professor Emerita
Department of Biology
University of Iowa
Iowa City, IA 52242



Topographic map of southern Iowa City and environs. Ryerson's Woods Park is indicated by the arrow and the park boundary is delimited by the yellow line.



2010 aerial photograph of Ryerson's Woods. The park boundary is delimited by the yellow line.



Left, Large-flowered Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*) and right, Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*).



Purple Cress (*Cardamine douglassii*).