

PLEASANT CREEK STATE PARK RECREATION USE PLAN

In advance of the 100th anniversary of Iowa state parks in 2020, the Department of Natural Resources is developing plans for future recreation opportunities that are compatible with the resources of each state park.

PLEASANT CREEK STATE RECREATION AREA - A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Iowa's first state park, Backbone, was dedicated in 1920 and more quickly followed - special places acquired before their truly significant natural and cultural features were irretrievably lost through forces such as agriculture, logging, and urbanization. Recreation facilities were generally few in the early parks. As the 1920's progressed, however, there was a growing demand for more active things to do in state parks; pursuits like camping, swimming, and boating. The Great Depression of 1929 stalled state park efforts, but President Roosevelt's "New Deal" programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the CCC, and the Works Progress Administration, the WPA, brought thousands to work in an expanding park system, building cabins, lodges, beaches, shelters, roads, dams and a myriad of other structures. World War II brought another slowdown to state park efforts, but peacetime brought a great expansion of the state park system, with a number of new areas in southern Iowa. Park usage surged and camping became tremendously popular in the 1950's and 60's.

The early 1960's saw the "Large Lakes" program; an initiative of the Governors Committee on Conservation of Outdoor Resources to identify those regions of the state lacking in water oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.

The first target locations for large lake projects included the Ft. Dodge/Brushy Creek area, the Sioux City area, and the Fayette County/Volga River area. These new areas were to be "state recreation areas," providing a maximum of outdoor

recreation opportunities through public hunting in designated portions of the sites and 24 hours lake access for anglers.

In the late 1960's, Iowa Electric Light and Power Company of Cedar Rapids began efforts to construct a nuclear power plant on the Cedar River in Linn County which required construction of an artificial lake as a source of supplemental cooling water. When river flows returned to normal levels, the water level in the impoundment would be restored by pumping in the opposite direction.

The company presented a proposal to the Iowa Conservation Commission in November, 1970, to include an agreement that would provide funding for construction of the dam and necessary pumping system. The lake site was on Pleasant Creek, a small tributary of the Cedar River, fifteen miles northwest of Cedar Rapids. The new lake would be 410 acres. The agreement was formalized in April, 1973. Acquisition of the 1,927 acre area began in mid-1972 and proceeded until 1975.

A master plan was prepared in 1975. Facility development at Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area commenced in 1978 and extended over the next decade. The new area quickly became a quality destination for angling and for hiking, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding. The balance of the area was open to public hunting and extensive wildlife food and cover and tall and short grass prairie plantings were established. Eventual recreation facilities included a modern campground with 43 electric and 26 non-electric sites and shower and restroom facilities; beach complex with concession building; picnic areas and open shelters; enclosed shelter, and office and service center. Pleasant Creek is now one of the most popular units in the Iowa state park system.

PLEASANT CREEK STATE RECREATION AREA EXISTING FACILITIES

Existing Facilities	Quantity	Existing Facilities	Quantity
Beach	1	Restrooms	
Lodge	1	Seasonal (Flush)	6
Playground	1	Year-round	4
Fishing Pier	2	Campground	
Boat Ramp	5	Total Sites	71
Trails	10 miles	Electric	57
Boat House/Rental	1	Youth Group	1
Shelter	2	Cabins	4

Table (above): Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area Existing Facilities

A ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE OF PLEASANT CREEK STATE RECREATION AREA

GOAL –

Enhance visitor outdoor recreation and education experiences by upgrading facilities and trails at Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area. This will help to: promote visitor mental and physical health, enjoyment, and wellbeing; encourage family time and memory making; expand the availability of accessible facilities; protect natural resources for the future; and, generate economic activity in the region.

OBJECTIVES –

PARK ORIENTATION AND INTERPRETATION - INCREASE WAY-FINDING AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUE:

- There are prime locations where signage would provide interpretive and educative opportunities, park-wide.

PROPOSALS:

- Add 4-sided interpretive kiosks at Beach and Playground areas.
- Add a 2-sided interpretive kiosk at Lake Access Area.
- Add an interpretive panel at the Prairie Area.

OVERNIGHT FACILITIES - ENHANCE CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUE:

- Half of campground electric sites were upgraded in 2013, the remaining sites are 30-amp electric and do not meet the needs for modern day campers.

PROPOSAL:

- Upgrade (26) existing campsites to 50-amp and full hook-up services.



Image (above): Cabins provide an enjoyable alternative to traditional camping

BEACH AREA - ENHANCE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

ISSUE:

- The park's very popular beach facilities are heavily used and are becoming worn out.

PROPOSALS:

- Replace concession building.
- Add year-round restroom.



Image (above): The beach is very popular in the summer

PICNIC AREAS - ENHANCE THE EXISTING PICNICKING OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUE:

- Picnic facilities park-wide are in need of updating.

PROPOSALS:

- Replace North Picnic Area shelter
- Replace East Picnic Area shelter
- Add year-round restroom - Equestrian Staging Area.
- Add year-round restroom - Wooden Pier.



Image (above): New "Design Guide" picnic shelter

LAKE LODGE AREA - REDEVELOP THE RENTAL BUILDING

ISSUE:

- The existing rental building is outdated, small, and lacks kitchen and restroom facilities.

PROPOSALS:

- Replace existing rental building with combination shelter/kitchenette.



Image (above): Existing rental building - in need of replacing

PLAYGROUNDS - EXPAND PLAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PARK VISITORS

ISSUE:

- The old playground has traditional equipment that provides limited and less challenging, non-wheelchair accessible play elements.

PROPOSAL:

- Replace and add playgrounds in the picnic area, campground, and beach that include "nature-themed" elements such as climbing rocks, log/tree trunks, sand, vine tunnels, and tall grasses.



Image (above): "Nature-themed" play elements: tall grasses

BOATING AND FISHING - ENHANCE AND UPGRADE WATER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUE:

- The existing boat ramps park-wide are heavily used and becoming worn.

PROPOSALS:

- Replace (7) boat ramps - Park-wide.
- Add fish cleaning station - South (Lodge) Ramp.



Image (above): Fishing off the Wooden Pier at Pleasant Creek Lake

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

ISSUE:

- The current wastewater system needs to be upgraded.

PROPOSALS:

- Replace lift stations.
- Upgrade existing lagoons.

PARK HEADQUARTERS - ENHANCE VISITOR ACCESS AND PROVIDE EFFICIENT OPERATIONAL WORK AND EQUIPMENT STORAGE FACILITIES

ISSUE:

- The visitor entrance to the park office needs to be separated from the staff shop work space for public safety reasons.

PROPOSALS:

- Add a separate park office located outside of the shop's fenced-in area.
- Remodel and add one heated bay to the existing shop.
- Replace the equipment storage building.

RECREATION USE PLAN

Implementation of the Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area Recreation Use Plan will help ensure that this classic Iowa state park remains a premier outdoor destination in the future. The draft plan was prepared with the input of park staff and will have review and input of current proposed park improvements from park visitors/regional stakeholders. It will be a detailed and practical blueprint for future action. All improvements will be completed with due regard for Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area's unique natural resources and great scenic qualities.

The completion of a recreation use plan for each park will help determine the most effective allocation of funds on a project-by-project basis for the Iowa state park system as a whole. Pleasant Creek's plan recommendations will be accomplished as necessary funding becomes available from ongoing sources as well as through partnering opportunities which may arise.

High Priority (1)	Cost Estimate
Add (2) 4-sided kiosks - Beach and Playground Areas	\$60,000
Add 2-sided interpretive kiosk - Lake Access Area	\$15,000
Add interpretive panel - Prairie Area	\$4,000
Upgrade wastewater treatment	TBD
High Priority Total:	\$TBD
Medium Priority (2)	
Upgrade (26) campsites to 50-amp electric - Campground	\$130,000
Replace concession building - Beach Area	\$510,000
Add year-round restroom - Beach Area	\$60,000
Replace existing rental building with combination shelter/kitchenette	\$425,000
Replace (7) boat ramps - Park-wide	\$175,000
Replace/Add (3) playgrounds - Picnic Area, Campground, and Beach Area	\$240,000
Medium Priority Total:	\$1,540,000
Low Priority (3)	
Replace shelter - North Picnic Area	\$110,000
Replace shelter - East Picnic Area	\$110,000
Add year-round restroom - Equestrian Staging Area	\$60,000
Add year-round restroom - Wooden Pier	\$60,000
Add separate park office - Outside Shop Fenceline	\$250,000
Add heated bay to existing shop	\$50,000
Replace equipment storage building	\$110,000

Table (above): Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area Project Priorities



Image (above): Scenic view of Pleasant Creek Lake

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PLEASANT CREEK

