

MINUTES
STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD
Starr's Cave - Burlington
October 28, 2009

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Cindy Peterson, Chair
Stephen Dinsmore
Armando Rosales
Deb Lewis
Carl Kurtz
Patricia Boddy, Deputy Director – DNR

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Gail Brown

STAFF PRESENT

John Pearson
Daryl Howell
Mark Edwards
Bob McKay
Lisa Nissen

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Cindy Peterson called the meeting to order at 8:40 PM on October 28, 2009 at Starr's Cave in Burlington.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Armando Rosales to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Deb Lewis. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No changes were made to the May 8, 2009 minutes and are approved as presented.

STARR'S CAVE ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

At the May 8, 2009 meeting, the Board requested staff to prepare a management plan for the Starr's Cave State Preserve. DNR, Des Moines CCB, and Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission staff met onsite in July to discuss vegetation management and to evaluate alternatives to the Flint River Trail

proposed to pass through the preserve. The draft Resource Inventory and Ecological Management Plan is before you today to modify the current General Rules of Management (1978).

The Board members discussed the management plan and noted that all of the uses were still listed the same.

Motion was made by Pat Boddy to adopt the Starr's Cave – State Preserve Resource Inventory and Ecological Management Plan 2009. Seconded by Deb Lewis. Motion carried.

Kim Perlstein stated that she is very pleased with the plan and thanked the DNR for their work and cooperation.

FLINT RIVER TRAIL ROUTE PROPOSAL

With the proposed extension of the Flint River trail through Starr's Cave State Preserve, the Preserves Board has been asked to approve the changes to the General Rules of Management that would accommodate a new use of the preserve and fix old problems. Debate at previous meetings has raised several concerns, including philosophical concerns questioning the introduction of bicycles to a preserve, the need for investigation of off-preserve trail alternatives, and the desire to avoid environmental impacts. In response to these concerns, Mike Norris of the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission has prepared an analysis of alternative routes and identification of measures to make a revision of the proposed trail more commented on his concerns and suggestions for the revised proposal. His report is called:

Flint River Trail Alternative Route Analysis

DNR Trails Coordinator Mark Edwards prepared an addendum to the Route Analysis entitled Starr's Cave Trail Report.

If the option to allow the revised proposal for a trail through the preserve is adopted, the measures identified in these two documents will become the trails component of a new management plan to replace the current General Rules of Management.

Stephen Dinsmore asked if the alternative trails would be ADA compliant.

John Pearson said no the trails are too steep that bicycles would need to be walked up.

Mike Norris said that we are not intending that the hills would be a big issue. We don't anticipate a high volume of traffic going through the actual preserve portion. We are not planning to use any federal dollars on portions of the trail that do not meet the 12% slope requirement. There is a study that shows families typically ride for about 10 miles. So from the two most popular starting points (City of

Burlington and Big Hollow), most families would turn around before proceeding through the preserve.

Kim Perlstein also plans to hire a full time trail manager to enforce bike rules and maintain the entire trail.

John Pearson went through outlined the following concerns:

History

Extensive planning of trail routes with local stakeholders. Unfortunately, State Preserves Advisory Board was not consulted until very late in process. Preserves Board declined to approve trail. Decision appealed to DNR Director and Natural Resource Commission. NRC nearly approved trail, but remanded issue to SPAB for re-evaluation.

Opportunity to define under what conditions the trail could be built:

- Conditions set by Preserves Board (see below)
- Case-by-case, not precedent; accounting for unique settings of individual preserves; lengthy and demanding approval process

Benefits

- Fix existing trail problems
- Little change to existing trails outside of problem areas (crushed rock surfacing)

Costs

Extension through old field (Pine Plantation and Prairie Planting)

Use by bicycles

- High use in east end: Disturbed Bottomlands, mostly in Active Recreation Area
- Moderate use in west end: old field (Pine Plantation and Prairie Planting)
- Low use in center: between east and west dismount stairs (Mesic Upland Woods, Rolling Upland Woods, North-facing Slope, Old Pastures)

Reduction in undisturbed character of nature preserve

- Increased visitor activity
- Possible introduction of seeds from bicycle tires

Conditions

1) Use existing trail in Starr's Cave, with 1500' of new trail constructed in the western part of the preserve

2) Improve the existing trail where needed, on the east and west slopes, to control existing erosion problems. The improvements will seek to slow

and divert water from the trail to reduce erosive ability. This can be accomplished in several methods, such as:

- Water bars
- Rolling grade dips
- Stair stepping.
- Culverts
- Surfacing
- Soil cement
- Dry-wells
- Geo-textile materials
- Silt retention check dams
- Erosion control matting
- Rerouting in places
- Soil placement
- Plantings
- Landscaping
- Oversight by DNR Trails Coordinator Mark Edwards

3) Implement measures to keep users on trail

- Natural obstacles
- Trail narrowing
- Railings
- Mini-ramps on steps
- Enforcement signage and increased fines for violators;
- Trail enforcement officials
- Walk-only areas
- Commitment to ongoing enforcement
- Authority to stop bicycle use if off-trail use becomes significant problem

Overall

- County officials will submit detailed plans to Iowa DNR - including State Preserves Advisory Board - for all aspects of trail repair, improvement, enforcement, and signage for their approval
- Continuous maintenance schedule

Armando Rosales asked if a bicycle trail could be built through the middle of the preserve and still protect the integrity of the preserve.

John Pearson said after fulfilling considering all aspects of the preserve, yes it could be done.

Motion was made by Armando Rosales to approve construction of the bike trail through the Preserve along with the three conditions noted by John Pearson. Seconded by Pat Boddy.

Pat Boddy said that we should look at this as an educational tool and an opportunity to promote the preserves. I would strongly encourage bike racks and interpretative signage throughout the preserve. Hopefully, this would encourage some walking.

Stephen Dinsmore said that a lot of this could have been avoided had the Preserve Board been involved from the very beginning.

Cindy Peterson said that she doesn't feel that in sixty years this is going to be the best decision for Starr's Cave, though she'd love to see improved hiking trails just no bicycles.

Deb Lewis stated her concern on what kind of precedence this will set for future preserves requesting bike trails.

Kim Perlstein asked the board if she shouldn't be promoting higher attendance levels at the preserve for educational purposes. Is my goal in conflict with what the board intends preserves to be used for?

Cindy Peterson said that the bridge to the cave portion of the preserve is classified as active use recreation. We would expect high traffic flow. The other areas of the preserve defined as passive could be enjoyed by walking through.

Pat Boddy said that the definition of management is in code. To preserve it, at its highest level of protection with the public's best interest. This could be a great way to restore and protect the current trails. This is not intended to set precedence.

Roll call vote went as follows:

Deb Lewis – no

Carl Kurtz – yes

Stephen Dinsmore – no

Armando Rosales – yes

Pat Boddy – yes

Cindy Peterson – no

Motion failed.

CEDAR HILLS SAND PRAIRIE

The Natural Resource Conservation Service has approved a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) application for the Bill Colwell property located immediately west of Cedar Hills Sand Prairie State Preserve. As the owner and manager, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) would like to provide Mr. Colwell with seed from the preserve to seed his uplands and to a lesser degree his wetlands. Due to the proximity of this property, TNC is concerned about the use of outside seed sources and feel that using seed from Cedar Hills will effectively expand the ecological borders of the preserve. TNC is also planning to perform a prescribed burn there this fall and possibly again next spring.

Matt Fisher with the Nature Conservancy asked the board for permission to harvest from Sand Prairie.

Motion was made by Carl Kurtz to approve the request as presented. Seconded by Pat Boddy. Motion carried.

WILLIAMS PRAIRIE LEGAL DESCRIPTION CORRECTION

The Nature Conservancy is requesting that the articles of dedication be amended for Williams Prairie State Preserve to correct typographical errors in the original legal description. The Nature Conservancy is the owner of the Preserve. A public notice was published in the Iowa City Press Citizen to allow for public comment as required by Iowa Code 465C.9 and 465C.11. No comments were received from the public. Letter with full details was included in the agenda package.

Motion was made by Carl Kurtz to approve the legal description correction as presented. Seconded by Deb Lewis. Motion carried unanimously.

GLENWOOD ARCHAEOLOGICAL STATE PRESERVE

A dedication ceremony was held for the newest preserve at Glenwood Resource Center on October 22. Approximately, 75 individuals were present to dedicate the 906 acre preserve that will protect over 100 known archaeological sites including at least 27 earth lodge sites that are related to the Glenwood culture, also known as the Nebraska phase of the Central Plains tradition. Under agreement with the DNR, the Mills County Conservation Board will manage the preserve.

DR. LOIS TIFFANY

Dr. Lois Tiffany passed away on September 6, 2009. She served as a member of the State Preserves Advisory Board from 1995 to 2001 and had a long and productive career at Iowa State University. Dr. Tiffany was a wonderful naturalist and great mentor to students.

In her honor, the Board members observed a moment of silence.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Carl Kurtz reported that Doolittle Prairie preserve has rut damage from the fire vehicles managing a prescribed burn. This happened during the spring; however, I have not seen the damage personally.

Deb Lewis invited everyone to Ada Hayden's 125th birthday at ISU this Tuesday from 4-7 PM in Bessey Hall. There will be a program and tour

John Pearson said that Deb Lewis serves on the Brushy Creek Advisory trail board.

Deb Lewis said that at the most recent meeting of the Brushy Creek Advisory trail board, they mentioned that they want to connect the north and south equestrian trails at Brushy Creek. One of the options presented was to go through the preserve. The cost estimates for this trail connection would be approximately \$500K - \$1M. Because of the recent budget cuts in parks, they have put this expansion on hold.

2010 MEETING SCHEDULE

January 29th
April 30th
July 23rd
October 29th

Due to the recent budget cuts, all meetings will start at 10:00 AM in the Des Moines area unless a tour is necessary in making a decision.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Pat Boddy to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Deb Lewis. Motion carried.

With no further business to come before the State Preserves Advisory Board, Chairperson Cindy Peterson adjourned the meeting at 11:04 AM on October 28, 2009.

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