

SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE FUNDING

REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JANUARY 9, 2009



SUBMITTED BY
THE SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE FUNDING
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE FUNDING ADVISORY REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Promise to Iowa

In 2006, the forward thinking of our legislators to propose and support the concept of sustainable funding for Iowa's natural resources, and their request for diverse organizations to represent their Advisory Committee, was an indicator that this is an important issue for all of Iowa. The result of securing funding for natural resources will provide benefits across Iowa such as cleaner water, positive economic impacts, sustainable agriculture and soils, and outdoor recreation opportunities where Iowans can enjoy and appreciate healthy activities, nature, and Iowa's beauty. In August 2006, the Advisory Committee began their work to meet the legislative mandate under House File 2797 and provide information and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly.

During the 2007 legislative session, under Senate Resolution 50, the Legislative Council appointed an Interim Study Committee to continue the study and assess ways to address Iowa's needs for today, tomorrow, and the future. On 01/28/08, after thoughtful and thorough evaluation, inquiries, presentations, and discussion, the Interim Committee unanimously approved their final report to recommend support and action for the wide-reaching and diverse benefits sustainable funding will provide to Iowans and Iowa's natural resources.

Iowa's Neighboring States

Many states are establishing or working toward ways to provide sustainable funding for their natural resources and have spent years to get to the point Iowa is at. Iowa is on the leading edge of investing in the comprehensive benefits natural resources would provide. On 11/02/07, legislators and leaders from MN, MO, MI, and NC presented to the Legislative Interim Committee. Their common messages were:

- Protection, enhancement, and management of our natural resources are vital to all Iowans and the legacy we leave to future generations.
- Investments in Iowa's natural resources reap great economic benefits.
- If we want to expand Iowa's workforce and attract visitors to the state, we need to provide outdoor recreation and natural resource amenities that provide opportunities they seek and require, and have the financial ability to support and maintain those investments.
- The dedicated tax constitutes irrefutable evidence that Iowans want action and recognize the need to save Iowa's natural areas and other special places.
- Stable funding fosters long term vision and partnerships needed to uphold the promise of a quality environment for all Iowans.

As we know, Missouri has been funding their natural resources with great success for many years and Minnesota has been working for ten years to get funding for their natural resources. On 02/14/08, Minnesota passed a bill which sailed through the House and Senate allowing voters to decide on a constitutionally protected increase in the state sales tax. In November 2008, the people "spoke" and the initiative succeeded.

Action from Iowa Legislators

On 02/21/08, Senate Study Bill 3217, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Iowa Constitution to protect a portion of state revenue (3/8 of 1 cent) for natural resources, was

introduced and passed the Senate Natural Resource Committee unanimously. In follow up, legislators introduced Senate Joint Resolution 2002, a Joint Resolution that proposed an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Iowa to dedicate a portion of state revenue for the benefit of the state's natural resources. It also establishes the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. SJR2002 does not raise taxes - it is an opportunity for the people to vote to protect funding for natural resources. On 04/25/08, Iowa legislators overwhelmingly voted in favor of SJR 2002. This was one passage. In Iowa, a constitutional amendment needs to pass two different General Assemblies before it can go to a vote of the people, which can occur as early as 2010.

The 2008-2010 Charge of the Advisory Committee - HF2580

On 04/11/08, legislators requested the continuation of the diverse organizations that make up the Advisory Committee until January 2010 under HF2580 with reports being due January 9, 2009, and January 8, 2010, to the Governor and General Assembly. Under this bill, two organizations were added to the Advisory Committee: LICA (Land Improvement Contractors Association) and IRR (Iowa Rivers Revival).

The legislative charge notes: The purpose of the advisory committee is to continue the efforts of the sustainable natural resource funding advisory committee established pursuant to 2006 Iowa Acts, chapter 1185, section 43. The committee shall

- 1) study how to provide one or more sustainable sources of funding for natural resources and outdoor recreation needs in Iowa, and
- 2) advise members of the general assembly in efforts to establish or administer sustainable funding sources.

This report will focus on the HF2580 charge.

SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE FUNDING ADVISORY REPORT

HF 2580 LEGISLATIVE CHARGE #1

Provide one or more sustainable sources of funding for natural resources and outdoor recreation needs in Iowa.

ADDRESSING THE NEED

In discussing the amount of money that could be spent to address Iowa’s natural resources needs, the Sustainable Funding Advisory Committee (SFC) realized that figures could climb to unreasonable amounts. Billions could be spent. To help provide focus, the SFC defined natural resources into three categories:

- 1) Soil and Water
- 2) Fish, Wildlife and Natural Areas
- 3) Parks and Trails.

To detail further the concepts that directed the committee toward the recommended funding, general benefits were identified that new dedicated sustainable funds would provide in addition to any current funding being allocated. These benefits are identified by their connection to the natural resource categories.

Natural Resource Categories	General Benefits
SOIL AND WATER	
Soil (conservation practices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accelerate application of soil and water conservation practices • increase awareness of need for conservation systems • encourage and support waterway buffers • protect and restore wetland areas • advocate sustainable farming practices such as: conservation tillage and demonstrate innovative methods and new technologies (soil saving techniques, nutrient management, etc.)
Water (quality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • target conservation measures and water quality improvement efforts in watersheds. • reduce sediment • create/build federal, state, and local partnerships • help communities problem solve water quality and water quantity concerns • provide incentives to implement quality improvement programs and efforts
FISH, WILDLIFE, NATURAL AREAS	
Fish, Wildlife, Natural Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect and improve the status of Iowa’s wildlife diversity • provide safe habitat for endangered species in Iowa • make Iowa’s lakes and streams great places to recreate • provide places for people to see wildlife (i.e. improve wildlife viewing opportunities) • increase opportunities to enjoy Iowa’s outdoors • preserve and protect Iowa’s high quality natural heritage • ensure that all Iowans will have access to natural areas in rural and urban areas • create and protect access to natural areas • improve hunting and fishing opportunities and access in rural and urban areas • protect, restore and manage prairies, forests, savannas, wetlands, and preserves • provide assistance to landowners to establish/manage the prairie and forestry base • provide adequate monitoring and management of Iowa’s natural resources • provide proactive options and quality management against invasive species

PARKS AND TRAILS	
Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve state, county, city park infrastructure • create a grade-A system of state and local parks by improving or providing: shelter houses, trails, campgrounds, shelters, beaches, water accesses • destination sites to draw people from other states • increase recreational opportunities with the goal of providing every Iowan a place to go for outdoor recreation within one half-hour of their home
Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a trail system that will serve the recreational diversity of Iowans and attract visitors and tourists.
ALL 3 CATEGORIES: PARKS/TRAILS, SOIL/WATER, FISH/WILDLIFE/NATURAL AREAS	
Parks/Trails, Soil/Water, Fish/Wildlife/ Natural Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide quality, engaging, and significant environmental and conservation education opportunities for the public, private landowners, and community leaders • establish, strengthen, and maintain nature centers and naturalist programs • educate and encourage private landowners toward productive and innovative land and water management techniques • train developers and community leaders on conservation and environmentally friendly principles toward Iowa's resources • initiate proactive outreach and interpretive programs

FUNDING MECHANISM PRIORITIZATION

The SFC recognized that the funding source, aka **funding mechanism**, would need to be a dedicated, sustainable promise to Iowans. After in-depth research, the SFC evaluated a broad range of sustainable funding mechanisms. The brainstormed list of over 45 mechanisms was narrowed down using viability filters that determined what criteria the funding mechanism should meet:

1. All Iowans will benefit from sustainable funding for natural resources and the burden of funding should be a responsibility of all Iowans. (This criterion is supported by the public's responses in the "Willingness to Pay" survey.)
2. The funding mechanism should have statewide appeal and be politically viable.
3. The source of funds should be easy to administer without the need to establish significant additional administrative staff.
4. New funds, when possible, should have the ability to be leveraged to increase their effectiveness.
5. Each new funding mechanism must raise over \$5 million annually to be considered by the committee.
6. The new funding mechanism must conform to all state and federal commerce regulations.
7. The funding mechanism should be "new money" and not a replacement of existing resources.
8. The funding mechanism should be stable, protected, and identified as dedicated.
9. The new funding must unite, rather than divide, conservation agencies and organizations.

RECOMMENDED FUNDING MECHANISM

After researching and reviewing current streams of funding and budgets, the committee has, conservatively, estimated that sustainable funding using of 3/8 of 1 cent derived from new sales tax revenue will begin to address the needs of Iowa's natural resources. This dedicated funding would be in addition to any base funding currently allocated. This additional funding, strategically used at state and local levels, will provide comprehensive benefits across Iowa.

The Sustainable Funding Advisory Committee respectfully recommends a proposal be presented to the people of Iowa to approve constitutionally protecting funds for natural resources. Dedicating sales tax of 3/8th of 1 cent, at the next sales tax increase, would fund the natural resource needs identified under the three broad categories of:

- 1. Soil and Water**
- 2. Fish, Wildlife, and Natural Areas**
- 3. and Parks and Trails.**

This amendment will help secure the following now and for the future:

- A diverse, healthy environment with cleaner water, sustainable agriculture and soils, and habitats for the broad variety of Iowa's fish, wildlife, and natural communities.
- Outdoor recreation opportunities close to home where Iowans can enjoy and appreciate healthy activities, nature, and Iowa's beauty.
- Sustainable natural resources and visitor attractions are vital to our economy and are a magnet for a vibrant workforce in Iowa.

SF 2580 LEGISLATIVE CHARGE #2

Advise members of the general assembly in efforts to establish or administer sustainable funding sources.

FUNDING VEHICLES

To support the three broad categories, seven **funding vehicles** were identified as logical avenues to distribute the funding. The SFC worked carefully and diligently to reduce additional levels of bureaucracy for funding distribution by recommending current programs when applicable. The seven funding vehicles are:

- **REAP** (Resource Enhancement And Protection program)
- **LCPP** (Local Conservation Partnership Program)
- **WP** (Watershed Protection)
- **LR** (Lake Restoration)
- **Trails**
- **Natural Resources** (Iowa Department of Natural Resources)
- **Agriculture and Land Stewardship** (Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship)

FUNDING VEHICLES – BENEFITS SUMMARY

The table below summarizes the needs within a funding vehicle and the recommended percent of the new revenue above any current appropriation. The recommended funding should be dedicated and sustainable since leveraged funds are neither. With dedicated recommended funding, local, state, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) can use this new funding over fiscal year budget amounts to plan and apply for leverage funds when possible.

FUNDING VEHICLE	RATIONALE	RECOMMENDED FUNDING
REAP (Resource Enhancement And Protection)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REAP’s current annual allocation is not secure and not sustainable. • County applications are left unfunded at a 5:1 ratio and city applications at a 3:1 ratio. • The committee recommends full funding of REAP to the authorized level of \$20 million in addition to 13% of the new revenue. This program provides funding for projects that enhance our natural, cultural, and recreational resources across the state at multiple levels of government and management. 	<p>1. Fully fund at authorized level of \$20.0 million.</p> <p>2. Fund at 13% of 3/8 of 1 cent (FY07 \$20.0 million) in addition to funds currently appropriated.</p>
LCPP (Local Conservation Partnership Program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicating these funds is part of a strategic effort to best address conservation needs in local communities. • Funds would be made available to county conservation boards, nongovernmental organizations, and cities. • 13% of the new revenue would address habitat protection and conservation, infrastructure needs, conservation education, and nature interpretation at the local level. 	<p>Fund at 13% of 3/8 of 1 cent (FY07 \$20.0 million)</p> <p>[new program – this would become its base funding]</p>

<p><u>WP</u> (Watershed Protection)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for funding by project applicants annually seek twice the funds available. • Increased emphasis on the watershed approach to solving environmental problems will further increase demand. • 14% of the new revenue would improve and support a watershed approach to solving water quality environmental problems. Watershed protection includes encouragement of watershed groups, targeted projects, wetland restoration, and runoff filtration management techniques. 	<p>Fund at 14% of 3/8 of 1 cent <i>(FY07 \$20.0 million)</i></p> <p>[new program – this would become its base funding]</p>
<p><u>LR</u> (Lake Restoration)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local involvement and watershed protection are essential components of all successful lake restoration projects which increase economic development. • 7% of new revenue for lake restoration needs will commit to Iowans' value of water quality and desire for safe, healthy lakes that provide a full complement of aesthetic, ecological, and recreational benefits. 	<p>Fund at 7% of 3/8 of 1 cent <i>(FY07 \$10.0 million)</i> in addition to funds currently appropriated.</p>
<p><u>Trails</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 % of the new revenue would provide for the addition of hiking, walking, biking, and water trails, and maintenance of existing trails. • Marketing and trail linkages are vital in expanding recreation opportunities. • An investment in trails would leverage additional federal, local, and private funds. 	<p>Fund at 10% of 3/8 of 1 cent <i>(FY07 \$15.0 million)</i> in addition to funds currently appropriated.</p>
<p><u>Natural Resources</u> (Iowa Department of Natural Resources)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNR is the state agency charged with conserving and enhancing Iowa's natural resources and providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities. • 23% of new revenue will address needs in state parks, state preserves, wildlife areas, state forests, wildlife habitats, wildlife diversity program, access for hunting and other recreational activities, technical assistance from forestry, fisheries and wildlife biologists through private landowner programs and incentives, water trails, river and streams programs, natural resources outreach including natural history interpretation in the parks and natural areas, angling opportunities, conservation law enforcement, and recreational safety programs. 	<p>Fund at 23 % of 3/8 of 1 cent <i>(FY07 \$35.0 million)</i> in addition to funds currently appropriated.</p>
<p><u>Agriculture and Land Stewardship</u> (Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% of new revenue will assist in meeting the demand for the soil conservation and watershed protection programs the Department administers. This money would provide additional technical assistance to soil and water conservation districts, develop a stream bank and buffer stabilization project, initiate a state-funded CRP-type program to keep lands in hay and grass, and start a tillage management incentive program to assure adequate crop residue levels in areas impacted by demand for cellulosic ethanol production. • This new money would also be used to support environmental agricultural and livestock stewardship. 	<p>Fund at 20 % of 3/8 of 1 cent <i>(FY07 \$30.0 million)</i> in addition to funds currently appropriated.</p>

FUNDING VEHICLES – BENEFITS EXPANDED

Natural resource management is complex, however, these funding vehicles are interrelated and, because of that, can provide assistance to meet the diverse needs of our resources. For example, Iowa's precious water resource can be positively affected by five to six of the funding vehicles funneling up to 60% of the new funding toward that resource in some way. These funding vehicles are structured in a way to complement each other.

RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT AND PROTECTION (REAP)

REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) is a program in the State of Iowa that invests in the enhancement and protection of the state's natural and cultural resources. REAP is funded from the State's Environment First Fund (Iowa gaming receipts) and from the sale of the natural resource license plate. Created in 1989, with a standing annual appropriation of \$30 million, it was amended in 1996 to reduce the standing appropriation to \$20 million per year and extend it to 2021. REAP has never been funded at its full amount. The state legislature sets the amount of REAP funding each year and in the last six years that level has only averaged approximately \$10 million. In FY08, legislation appropriated \$15.5 million. Distribution of REAP funds are based upon a percentage formula that is specified by law.

REAP is often the ONLY source of funding for small and medium-sized communities in need of city park improvements and historic site preservation because of declining local revenue, affecting perhaps 90% of Iowa towns. In the last four years, Iowans have identified nearly four times the funding amount of projects than what is available from REAP. In 2007, county conservation needs were five times more than the REAP budget.

The following are areas sustainable funding will affect Iowa and Iowans through this funding vehicle:

Projects include:

- Establish buffer strips, wetlands, and roadsides prairies to improve water quality.
- Plant trees and prairies on eroding farm ground.
- Protection of critical habitat.
- Opening wild areas and streams to public access.
- Connect, lengthen, and rehabilitate recreational trails.
- Provide campgrounds and city parks with electricity, waste treatment, and modern restrooms.
- Restore historic sites and records to preserve Iowa's heritage.
- Provide education about Iowa conservation for young and adult students.

Benefits from these REAP projects include:

- Local economies and quality of life enhanced through increases in outdoor recreation.
- Iowa's young workforce more encouraged to remain in-state with improved outdoor recreation and higher quality natural resources.
- Land and water stewardship leading to healthy and diverse wildlife and better water quality.

- Health improvements for citizens who increase their activities in enhanced outdoor recreation opportunities.

REAP is a catalyst to leverage more funding committed to natural resources.

- REAP spending on water quality projects is used as the state's match to secure EPA funding for non-point source pollution reduction.
- Cities, counties, and conservation organizations often bring to the table three times more money from other sources to match up with REAP funds to complete their projects. REAP money is often "seed money" that attracts additional funding sources such as from Boy Scout troops and Lions Clubs to federal transportation grants and anonymous donors. Farmers often use their own money to match REAP funding for soil and water conservation practices.

LOCAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (LCPP)

This program would provide sustainable funding for infrastructure, nature interpretation and outreach, and habitat conservation techniques at the local level. The LCPP recognizes that much of what happens with natural resources happens locally. Funds would be distributed to county conservation boards, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and cities.

The following are areas sustainable funding will affect Iowa and Iowans through this funding vehicle:

Infrastructure:

- Renovate, develop, or enhance local campgrounds, nature centers, shelters, lodges, trails, bridges, restrooms, cabins, public water supplies, playgrounds, parking, shooting ranges, and other features that facilitate use of local parks and natural areas.
- Renovate areas with modern considerations for today's modern users and for handicap and elderly users.
- Develop park enhancements that will provide Iowans with healthy and satisfying enjoyment of natural resources within their local communities.
- Provide facilities to underserved population areas.
- Provide outdoor recreation opportunities that will result in a long-term return to the community – leading to improved vitality in Iowa communities.
- Upgrade and construct facilities for park workers, such as maintenance shops, offices, and ranger residences.
- In many cases, substantial funds for infrastructure improvements are able to be leveraged from local community groups and individuals. This leveraging will commonly be 4:1, and can approach 8:1 depending on the agencies and organizations involved.
- Enhance the ability of non-governmental organizations to partner with the state, county conservation boards, and cities to develop projects that will improve the public spaces of the state.

Currently, there is no state grant fund established to meet the funding needs for the work described above. There is currently a large backlog of projects that cannot be completed. In

Linn County alone there are approximately \$19 million in park capital projects and upgrades. Statewide, the figure is in the hundreds of million.

Interpretation and Outreach:

- Reach Iowa youth with interpretive programs in their local region. This has been shown to be a key element in developing citizens who are informed and engaged in their natural resources.
- Provide interpretive programming for underserved segments of the population, such as older students, elderly groups, young parents, etc.
- Provide interpretive programs about natural resources to Iowans in underserved areas (small rural counties and large urban areas).
- Develop citizens who better understand their own local natural spaces, and what they can provide.
- Develop a better awareness, both locally and nationally, that Iowa's communities provide an excellent quality of life (keeping our young people from leaving the state).
- Coordinate more local citizen-science projects, such as people taking care of their water or trying to better understand local wildlife.
- Develop more local exhibits and informative media about nature and the outdoors.
- Provide outreach to private landowners to assist them with ways to implement conservation on their property.
- Educate Iowans in effective conservation techniques to enhance and protect Iowa's natural resources.
- Promote programs for soil, water, wildlife and conservation to producers and farmers within Iowa and include non-resident landowners.
- Create local partnerships, formed as NGOs, with cities and counties work together on providing similar outreach projects. Other local entities, such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, County Extension Offices, etc., may partner with one of the funded groups to work on projects.
- Better engage youth on service projects in local communities.
- Send more Iowa students to camps and other extended learning opportunities or trainings at parks and natural areas.
- Provide more meaningful life sciences and social studies experiences and education through improved interaction between park interpreters and Iowa school teachers.
- Naturalists and interpretive staff at the local level are flooded with programming needs. In nearly every Iowa county, demand for interpretive programs and materials currently exceeds what the local financial resources can provide.

Habitat Conservation

There are more than 1,700 areas providing elements of natural resources recreation or appreciation managed by county conservation boards. Additional areas are managed by cities and non governmental groups. Habitat conservation will restore Iowa's local natural resources using proven techniques such as prescribed fire, invasive species control and reintroduction of native species. Examples are:

- The threat from invasive species is now seen as perhaps the greatest conservation challenge of our time. These funds will help meet the growing equipment, material, and other costs needed to control these weeds.
- Local lakes, ponds, and wetlands will be better managed for wildlife and water quality control. Currently, there are many water control structures that are in need of repair or replacement.
- Forests require periodic management if natural resource objectives are to be met. These funds will help localities prepare management plans and conduct timber stand improvements. Currently, a large majority of forests do not get the degree of management needed due to lack of funds.
- Prairies require periodic management, including burning, mowing, and herbicide application. These funds will help meet these management needs.
- Local agencies and organizations are strongly involved in managing local areas so as to reduce erosion and water pollution. These funds will create cleaner land and water.
- Measure conservation success and use results for adaptive management.
- If additional funds are not provided to local agencies and organizations, it is very likely Iowa will lose major battles against invasive species. The result will be a large loss of local wildlife and plant populations. Lack of management will adversely impact Iowa's forest, water, and prairie resources, and Iowans' quality of life.

WATERSHED PROTECTION

Watershed protection is important to every Iowan. As we all know, many years ago our state was covered with prairies, wetlands, and trees. Almost all of the land was broken, drained, and cut to facilitate agriculture development and community growth. Many of our watersheds have minimal protection and, as a result, our streams and lakes are subject to excess siltation, nutrient loading, and other pollutants and contaminants. It is imperative that we protect the existing watersheds and restore all that we can. Watershed protection takes many forms such as wetland restoration, grassland restoration, and runoff filtration. Efforts for watershed protection will enhance the Iowa landscape, quality of life, and help keep Iowans in Iowa.

The following are areas sustainable funding will affect Iowa and Iowans through this funding vehicle:

- Provide cleaner water to residents and visitors to the state.
- Improve the water supply which will result in lower cleanup and treatment costs for water.
- Expand recreational opportunities on our lakes, streams, and green spaces.
- Improve groundwater recharge.
- Protect open spaces.
- Increase economic development in the state.
- Provide opportunity for a better quality of life for the citizens of Iowa.
- Increase the ability to leverage federal dollars to expand project and partnership capabilities.

LAKES RESTORATION

Iowans value water quality and desire safe, healthy lakes that provide a full complement of ecological, aesthetic, and recreational benefits. Clean lakes improve the quality of life for Iowans and are compatible with economic growth. 2006 was a milestone year of intensified focus on Iowa's lakes. This emphasis was encouraged by the 2006 Infrastructure Bill (HF2782), which provides additional funding and requires the DNR to use a science-based approach to achieving lake water quality improvements. One hundred twenty seven of Iowa's principal public lakes were ranked for lake restoration suitability based upon a number of socio-economic, water quality, watershed factors. The ranking process resulted in a priority list of thirty-five lakes, which serves as a starting point for consideration of potential lake restoration projects. Local involvement and watershed protection are essential components of all successful lake restoration projects. The Lake Restoration program is actively working to build partnerships with local stakeholders, private landowners, and natural resource professionals to ensure successful projects.

The following are areas sustainable funding will affect Iowa and Iowans through this funding vehicle:

- Increasing the Lake Restoration legislatively appropriated funding level to \$10 million a year in addition to the recommended sustainable funding amount will allow the initial thirty-five priority lakes to be completed within the next seven years and allow restoration of the remaining 97 significant public lakes by the year 2030.
- Having funds to leverage local, federal and state sources will reduce completion of the initial 35 priority lake projects by years.
- Allow continued partnerships with areas such as Storm Lake in Buena Vista County and allow local sponsors, such as Crystal Lake-Hancock Co., Clear Lake-Cerro Gordo Co., Green Valley Lake-Union Co., Lake of Three Fires-Taylor Co. and Lake Darling-Washington Co., Prairie Rose Lake-Shelby Co., Green Valley Lake-Union Co. and Silver Lake-Delaware Co., to initiate or finalize projects.
- By improving water quality and extending the lifespan of these lakes, restoration and watershed projects will provide an initial return on investment within five years of project completion and then continue to provide significant economic benefits to local communities and the state (ISU/CARD study currently indicates Clear Lake-Cerro Gordo County provides \$30 million annually to the economy, after restoration this should double). The study also identified lake systems such as Big Creek Lake-Polk County where visitors currently spend \$18.6 million annually to recreate at the lake, resulting in total annual effects from these visits that include \$30.2 million of spending, \$10.7 million of wage and salary income, and 478 jobs. In order to maintain this economic spending and the resulting benefits, lake and watershed restoration dollars will need to be obligated for Big Creek Lake to reduce sediment and nutrient delivery to the lake and expand in-lake restoration practices.

- Current targeted watershed projects utilize a combination of Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and Department of Soil Conservation funds, federal farm program conservation funding and landowner cost share. Voluntary partnerships develop that provide benefits to landowners/farmers in the watershed (utilizing 75% state/federal funds and 25% landowner/farmers funds soil loss is dramatically reduced on the landscape and soil and nutrient delivery also reduced to the lake). The end product is increased land value and long term production value to landowners/farmers and improved and sustainable lake water quality.

TRAILS

In 1991 the Des Moines Register summarized the opportunities Iowa has for strengthening the state's trail system when it wrote *“California has beaches, Colorado has mountains, the South has warm winters. Iowa needs something that shouts to the nation “This is a great place to live!” The (amenities) have to be real and trails are real.”* Recreational trails enhance the area's quality of life making Iowa's communities much more attractive to expand the workforce and help promote active lifestyles. They are an outdoor facility that provides individuals and families a destination to further connect to each other and their natural resources.

Iowa is a national leader in the number of multi-use trail miles. Trails are primarily multi-use paved and non-paved surface paths and greenway corridors typically used for walking, bicycling, in-line skating, wildlife watching, horseback riding and other uses. Iowa also has water trails for paddling. In some areas, all-terrain vehicle riding and snowmobiling activities are a component of recreational trail offerings. The recognition, enhancement, and promotion of Iowa's great trail systems will require state funding for them to become trails of regional, state, and national attraction. Dependable state support is crucial to match federal recreational trails grants and to develop, market, and enhance Iowa's trails.

Trail systems become economic tools to the region and the state when they feature two key components:

- appeal to a broader audience than the local communities surrounding them.
- provide numerous recreational experiences by offering a variety of distances, connectivity among various types of trails, and diversity of activities.

Trails are often the linkage of several community and county projects. They truly exemplify regional and inter-organizational cooperation and coordination. Creating, promoting and maintaining a comprehensive system of bicycling, walking, and water trails is critical to Iowa's future as an active and healthy place to live.

The following are areas sustainable funding will affect Iowa and Iowans through this funding vehicle:

- Funding should be identified for developing, maintaining, and promoting the Iowa's trail system. Annual funding will allow for Iowa to accelerate its position as a national leader in trail development.

- Develop trails and implement local plans through corridor acquisition and development and provide vital trail signage and amenities such as directional marking along the trail and trail access facilities.
- Several of our prominent long distance trails in Iowa are nearing the end of their surface life span. Costs to repave trails are high. Re-routing poorly designed, unsafe and eroding dirt trails is less expensive, but still requires crews of laborers to do the work. Major maintenance challenges occur as managers continue to battle crushed limestone washouts from heavy rains and flooding, as well as bridge damage, leading to long-term trail closures.
- To utilize federal dollars, local match is usually required. For instance, in 2005, Iowa received over \$40 million in special appropriations for recreational trail projects. A 20% local match is required to utilize those federal dollars prior to 2010. The following are federal grant programs, commonly looked at annually for funding, that require a match: Federal Recreational Trails Program, State Transportation Enhancement Program, Regional Transportation Enhancement Program, and the Special Federal Appropriations.
- Funding for promotional and marketing efforts will expose the state and nationwide users to the full marvel of Iowa trails. Packaging of recreational opportunities can enhance enthusiasm for nature-based tourism. For example, communities along the Cedar Valley Nature Trail may expand their advertising to paddlers who frequent the Cedar River. Users can spend the weekend at bed & breakfasts or camping, bicycling, and paddling each day in the summer, or cross country skiing and snowmobiling in the winter.
- Education of proper use and warning of hazards is important as Iowa provides additional trails for individuals and families. It is also important for communities to incorporate emergency signage (E911) on their facilities. Additionally, eliminating hazards allows increase attraction and use of Iowa's trails.
- Funding for local communities and organizations to inform and educate users of and fix trail dangers, such as dangerous intersections or low head dam hazards along water trails.

NATURAL RESOURCES (IA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES)

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is the state agency charged with conserving and enhancing Iowa's natural resources. The general direction of DNR operations is set forth in the Code of Iowa 455A.2: "A department of natural resources is created, which has the primary responsibility for state parks and forests, protecting the environment, and managing energy, fish, wildlife, and land and water resources in this state." Part of the responsibilities of the Department are to safeguard public lands, public lakes and waters, fish and wildlife resources, threatened and endangered species, facilitate partnerships, and address and manage other related resource programs.

The following are areas sustainable funding will affect Iowa and Iowans through this funding vehicle:

Natural Resource Outreach

As more Iowans desire and participate in events, activities, land practices, and volunteerism opportunities that involve natural resources, we need to be able to find ways to meet their demand and interest. These would include educational programming, contact and assistance to private landowners, and access to natural resource dependent recreation, such as canoeing, wildlife observation, hunting, fishing, prairie walks, hiking which provide Iowans multiple health and well-being benefits, as well as providing local economical benefits.

- Complete a comprehensive natural resources interpretation and outdoors skills education plan.
- Increase the number of educational and environmental programs provided to the public at state parks, bird conservation areas, preserves, wildlife areas, and state forests to address the interests of young children through seniors, singles through families, men and women.
- Provide programs and activities for youth and families specific to urban areas to increase their involvement in the out-of-doors referencing the National program Leave-No-Child-Inside.
- Develop a natural resources stewardship program for industries to educate them on how to develop and implement sustainable natural resource habitat practices.
- Enhance and expand efforts where resource specialists work with land owners linking them to federal and state conservation programs and financial assistance for private land management that would improve forest health, species composition, wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreation.
- Develop a public access program. States adjacent to Iowa have successfully enrolled millions of private lands acres allowing recreation access.
- Develop natural resource demonstration areas regarding new land stewardship practices with interpretive signage in state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas for informal education opportunities on topics that could encourage Iowans to engage in sustainable/natural resource stewardship activities at home.
- Expand on current efforts to motivate and empower local communities and citizens to improve their natural resources. This can be accomplished through strengthening volunteer programs such as Keepers of the Land, AmeriCorps, IOWATER, Project AWARE, where diverse opportunities are provided and encouraged.

Resource Management

The purpose for management of Iowa's natural resources is to ensure that they are sustained for future generations. Research and monitoring will ensure sound science-based decision making and provide active management of land to maximize forest health, wildlife habitat, erosion

control, water quality, recreation, and invasive species control. A healthy environment leads to a healthy economy. A healthy economy assures the long-term future interests of Iowans.

- Develop a conservation easement program which will guide how land will be managed for our future generations. Iowa is a state that is largely privately owned. Conservation easements offer the opportunity to provide long term protection and capture the passion of Iowans wishing to preserve and protect our natural resources for future generations.
- Increase urban resource management programs and provide technical assistance to Iowa communities to improve the condition and care of their urban natural resources. This would include assistance to cities experiencing deer, geese, or other wildlife issues and also provide promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Coordinate and expand a comprehensive aquatic and terrestrial invasive species management plan which would include efforts to provide Iowa ecotype seed sources that are diverse and available to state parks, preserves, forest areas, and for buffering existing native prairies.
- Threatened and endangered species and species of greatest conservation concern need will be targeted for additional methods outlined in the state Wildlife Action Plan.
- Efforts to improve fish habitat in lakes and streams would increase the number of game fish available to anglers, as well as improve a diverse aquatic ecosystem.
- Increase urban forest management which would leverage additional partners' money and help meet unfunded requests.
- Expand programs to permanently protect, restore, reconstruct and enhance areas of habitat systems that include large core tracts, watershed and greenbelt corridors, and other associated travel corridors that can be managed for biodiversity.
- Increase funding opportunities through leveraging of federal, state, and local financial resources. Currently, state dollars are leveraged on an average 1:3 with federal dollars.

Conservation/Recreation Infrastructure

As public needs increase, so do facility needs, as well as field stations which are important service centers for the public. These facility needs would include:

- Complete modernization and basic improvements to the critical infrastructure needs (ie water, sewer, electrical, etc.) for regulation, safety, and accessibility compliance.
- The need for additional fish production capabilities was identified in a 2001 independent review. A new facility will provide the capability to meet current and future fish stocking needs and improve the health and survival of stocked fish.

- Establish new and improve existing trails in forests, state parks, and selected wildlife areas. This would include partnering with local communities to identify and establish trail corridors connecting public areas to local communities.
- Restore the historical infrastructure on state parks (ie CCC structures).
- Conduct state-wide shooting sports range construction and improvement projects, which would provide the public safe and accessible facilities.
- Upgrade and modernize field operation headquarters at priority locations across Iowa. These centers are the lifeline to providing customer service to Iowans, providing basic management of 400,000 acres of state owned/managed lands, and allowing for needed maintenance and management actions throughout the state.

AGRICULTURE AND LAND STEWARDSHIP (IA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND LAND STEWARDSHIP)

As our nation pursues energy independence and economic growth through the production of plant-based food, fuels and fiber, Iowa is in an unprecedented position—clearly a “crossroad” for our future. We must move forward considering the full scope of land management decisions, valuing our soil and water resources not only for continued production for economic prosperity but for sustaining a quality of life we value as Iowans.

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship incentive programs involve a financial commitment by individual landowners, local organizations, various government agencies, and others. These programs infuse money into the local economy in working with contractors, suppliers and other stakeholders. Healthy soil and water resources promote economic development and growth throughout the state. In addition, proper land management that is consistent with the capability of the land to sustain agriculture and preserve the state’s natural resources is also proven to protect infrastructure such as ditches, roads and bridges. As we stand at this crossroad, failure to consider the full scope of our actions will result in soil and water degradation. The rewards of economic growth and improved water and soil quality are possible if we plan and act wisely.

The following are areas sustainable funding will affect Iowa and Iowans through this funding vehicle:

- **Cost Share for Erosion Control:**
Over \$5 million in requests for terraces, waterways, grade stabilization structures, water and sediment control basins and other permanent practices were pending in the fall of 2007 that could not be implemented at the current funding level. Increased funding would allow for more emphasis on incentives to promote improved management systems that often require more intensive input by landowners such as cover crops. In addition, tillage management incentives would assure adequate crop residue levels to protect soil and water quality as producers pursue expanded production opportunities. This program assists landowners in reducing erosion and

sediment and nutrient delivery to water bodies. It also protects the soil resource to sustain agriculture production and state's economic base

- Conservation Practices Revolving No-Interest Loan Program:

This program allows landowners to utilize loans to fund all or a portion of needed conservation measures such as terraces, grade stabilization structures, waterways, wetlands, critical area plantings, and other conservation practices. In the existing program, money paid back on the loans sustains the program fund. There has been tremendous interest in the no interest loan program. Additional money in the fund could expand the availability of the program allowing us to reach more landowners to protect soil and water resources and help livestock producers.

- Watershed Protection Program:

By identifying issues, completing watershed assessments, presenting proposed solutions and predicting likely outcomes to improve soil and water quality, benefits would include:

- reduce sediment and nutrient delivery to water bodies
- prevent flooding
- protect ditches, roads, bridges and other infrastructure
- enhance recreation and wildlife opportunities

Additional funding would accelerate watershed assessment, planning and implementation. More watershed work in our state means that more Iowans have become aware of their impact on the environment and have taken an active role in their natural resource protection. Without the “buy in” of all citizens in a “locally led” effort, we cannot make the progress needed to protect the waters of the state. In addition, Iowa faces major issues related to roads, bridges, ditches and other infrastructure. Infrastructure is a part of every watershed; and it has been proven historically that the installation of conservation measures protect that infrastructure. As precious tax dollars are funneled into new and improved infrastructure, a targeted effort can be coordinated through the Watershed Protection program to work with federal, state and county transportation engineers.

- District Initiatives

Soil and water conservation district commissioners address natural resource issues that are most critical in their districts. Commissioners use state and local funds to leverage monies and programs made available by the federal farm program to provide needed staff support, increase landowner participation and fund project components. Outcomes would include:

- technical and administrative staff support to Iowa citizens
- increase landowner eligibility and participation in conservation programs

Additional funding could translate into increased efforts to install buffers and streambank stabilization measures, maintain highly-erosive acres in the Conservation Reserve Program, provide assistance with alternative waste management systems for feedlots, and cooperate in soil surveys to guide in the wise use of the land resource. In addition, farmers are turning to conservation professionals for assistance with acceptable alternatives to sustain soil productivity and water resources while exploring economic development associated with biomass production. This presents an unprecedented demand for research and demonstration, conservation planning and technical assistance. Additional funding could be used for application of emerging technologies, computer upgrades, staffing or technical service providers, and soil survey upgrades.

- Agricultural Drainage Wells

Agricultural drainage wells (ADWs) were constructed in north central Iowa beginning in the early 1900s to provide outlets for surface runoff and tile drainage water from cropland areas. Because ADWs discharge water directly to groundwater aquifers, they are potential routes for movement of contaminants to underground drinking water supplies. Individual landowners and those in an organized drainage district receive assistance to close high-priority agricultural drainage wells, which receive tile drainage from row-crop lands, and to establish alternative outlets. Outcomes:

- protect aquifers and drinking water sources
- wells adjacent to confined animal feeding operations are given priority

Costs associated with this program are high; but because of the potential impact on our drinking water supplies, this assistance must be a priority. A recent program amendment was made to allow for other management practices to be considered where conditions for providing alternative drainage has excessive costs or where other factors are present, such as shallow bedrock. The “continued use permits” will be expiring in 2009. There is a backlog of \$16,800,000 in unfunded applications. Work in this program is at a highly skilled technical level, and increased technical assistance will be needed to address the workload.

- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:

Wetlands are constructed on private land to treat cropland tile-drainage water from watersheds 50 – 200 times their size.

- wetlands remove 40-90% of the nitrate and 90+% of herbicide in tile drainage water from upper-lying cropland
- landowners continue to own and receive incentives to maintain the wetland through an easement with the State of Iowa through soil and water conservation districts

These constructed nitrate-removal wetlands are a proven method of reducing nitrate contributions to surface water in Iowa, to the Mississippi River and to the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone. With growing public concern nationwide and the potential impact on Iowa’s agricultural industry, the state must increase its efforts in this regard. Costs associated with constructed wetlands are high; but the US Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency pays 90% of the construction and the state’s share is reduced to 10%. Over 400 potential sites exist for landowner consideration. Increased state funding will provide more wetland filters and bring a substantial amount of additional federal funding to Iowa. Work in this program is at a highly skilled technical level, and increased technical assistance will be needed to address the workload.

- Integrated Farm and Livestock Management/Iowa Learning Farm:

Through a statewide demonstration and education program to “Build a Culture of Conservation,” individuals make strides in improving soil and water quality through improved input management that supports a collective commitment to our natural resources. Outcomes:

- further the acceptance of proven practices to reduce erosion and sediment and nutrient delivery to water bodies
- enhance soil quality to sustain agriculture production and the state’s economic base
- explore and embrace emerging technologies to refine management practices

- nurture individual landowner understanding of the consequences of their land management choices—both rural and urban

Bridging the gap from research to in-field management will assist Iowa landowners in balancing economic challenges and natural resource protection. This is particularly crucial given the potential impacts of cellulosic ethanol production. Since its inception, a variety of projects to keep up with refinement of existing practices and emerging technologies have gone unfunded; and additional funding would allow more crucial areas to be addressed. More farmers could be recruited to participate in a “farmer to farmer” research demonstration and education network focused on conservation management practices necessary for sustainable production of cellulosic ethanol.

- **Innovative Technology for Enhanced Conservation Services:**

With increased demands being placed on our soil and water resources and with increased public awareness and willingness to take an active role in protecting these resources, the need for additional technical assistance is apparent. Use of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) statewide would reduce survey and design time and insure greater accuracy in targeting our most critical areas. Increased funding could support staffing, training and technology to shift workload from prior routine activities that could be automated to priority outreach that leads to greater conservation achievements.

ADMINISTRATION

TRUST FUND

To provide central management of the new funding, the establishment of a Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund is recommended. This will serve as the main flow of funds to the seven funding vehicles. The Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund and funding vehicles will be responsible for managing accrued interest with the intent of reinvesting the interest back into their respective accounts.

TRUST FUND ACCOUNTABILITY

ANNUAL AUDIT

An annual audit of the income and expenditures should be completed by the State Auditor's office. This would provide an unbiased review.

ANNUAL REPORT / PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Each funding vehicle will provide an annual report of projects in progress or projects completed with the use of the sustainable funding. These individual reports would be compiled by the oversight committee and presented to the General Assembly and posted for public review.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

An oversight committee should be established to monitor the results of this investment. This committee would work in an advisory capacity to the funding managers and provide recommendations and guidance. With the commitment and knowledge the Sustainable Funding Advisory Committee (SFC) has provided to this process, it is recommended that the SFC be considered as the oversight committee.

FUNDING MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE VEHICLES

Four of the seven funding vehicles have established methods of distributing funds and will be able to effectively allocate using those methods:

- REAP (Resource Enhancement And Protection program)
- LR (Lake Restoration)
- Natural Resources (Iowa Department of Natural Resources)
- Agriculture and Land Stewardship (Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship)

The following three funding vehicles can be modeled after existing programs or integrated into an established distribution method:

- WP (Watershed Protection)
- Trails
- LCPP (Local Conservation Partnership Program)

The following is an outline for funding management within these three vehicles.

WP (Watershed Protection)

Managers considered for this vehicle are the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). These agencies are proficient in working to increase funding received by leveraging federal dollars. They also have a long history of coordinating efforts in addressing natural resource issues and have qualified administrative structures that can serve different watershed protection needs. These agencies are able to make this funding available to state, county, and local organizations and encourage partnerships. This funding can be used for:

- development and assessment grants for water quality and flood and erosion control
- nitrate issues, wetland and grassland restoration, and run off filtration
- land use easements on identified impaired watersheds
- cost share programs geared toward soil and water conservation
- work on private lands and public lands to benefit watersheds and water quality
- technical and financial assistance to proposed lakes for long term benefits
- expansion of new lakes or protect public water supply lakes that will be needed for future users or industry use.
- recreation and water supply lakes current and those that will be needed in the future.
- protecting sink holes and assist in closing agricultural drainage wells

Trails

Managers considered for this vehicle are the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Both have qualified administrative structures that can serve different trail needs. The DOT's business is corridors and their primary focus is land trails. The DNR has experience in historic trails, equestrian trails, water trails, and recreation vehicle trails. Both agencies value partnerships as well as understanding the correlation between the value of trails and the economic development and health issues they can address. They also work to increase the funding received through leveraging federal dollars.

LCPP (Local Conservation Partnership Program)

This program would provide sustainable funding for infrastructure, nature interpretation and outreach, and conservation management and protection techniques at the local level. The LCPP recognizes that much of what happens with natural resources happens locally. Funds would be channeled through the Iowa DNR to be distributed to county conservation boards, non-governmental organizations, and cities similar to the process used with REAP.

The following is an outline of this distribution process:

- 1) Program details
 - a) 100% grant program or similar to REAP's formula.
 - b) Partner funding match with possible consideration to having a sliding match to accommodate financially strapped or underserved communities.

- 2) Breakdown of funds to county conservation boards (60%), non-governmental organizations (25%), and cities (15%):
 - a) 60% - infrastructure
 - b) 25% - nature interpretation and outreach
 - c) 15% - habitat management and protection
- 3) Grant Review Committee:
 - a) One committee to oversee the grant process with representation from cities (small, medium, and large), non-governmental organization, county conservation board, agriculture, and education.

Other Considerations:

- Identify operating details in administrative rule or some other administrative guidance.
- Provide special consideration to under-served populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Funding Mechanism Recommendation:

To address how to provide one or more sustainable sources of funding for natural resources and outdoor recreation needs in Iowa:

The Sustainable Funding Advisory Committee respectfully recommends:

A proposal be presented to the people of Iowa to approve constitutionally protecting funds for natural resources. Dedicating sales tax of 3/8th of 1 cent, at the next sales tax increase, would fund the natural resource needs identified under the three categories of Soil and Water; Fish, Wildlife, and Natural Areas; and Parks and Trails. This amendment will help secure the funding now and for future generations. This new funding would supplement current allocations, not replace them.

This recommendation reflects Senate Joint Resolution 2002 that overwhelmingly passed in 2008 and needs to be approved by a second General Assembly for the people to be able to vote on this important issue.

2. Administration Recommendation:

To address efforts to establish or administer sustainable funding sources,

The Sustainable Funding Advisory Committee respectfully recommends:

- a. A Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund be created to serve as the main valve for revenue to flow to the identified funding vehicles.
- b. Interest accrued in this Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund and/or in the funding vehicle accounts should be restricted and reinvested back into the respective accounts.

c. Using the seven funding vehicles described in this report. To reduce bureaucracy and complexity, the majority of these vehicles (REAP, Lakes Restoration, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship) have established distribution methods. The other three vehicles (Watershed Protection, Trails, and Local Conservation Partnership Program) have been identified as modeling after or integrating into established agencies as described in the funding management section of this report. In addition to any current funding allocations, the SFC recommends that:

1. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship receive their sustainable funding allocation directly.
2. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources
 - a. Receive their sustainable funding allocation directly.
 - b. Receive the sustainable funding allocation as fiscal manager to administer the sustainable funding to the appropriate funding vehicles:
 - i. REAP
 - ii. Lake Restoration
 - iii. Watershed Protection
 - iv. Local Conservation Partnership Program
 - v. Trails

d. Incorporating accountability factors such as:

- an annual audit of the allocations by the State Auditor and
- an annual report / performance review from the funding vehicles to be presented to the General Assembly and posted for public review.

e. An oversight committee be established to monitor the results of this investment. With the commitment, knowledge, and support the Sustainable Funding Advisory Committee (SFC) has provided to this process, it is recommended that the SFC be considered as the oversight committee with the continuation of the Department of Natural Resources chairing the SFC. This committee would work in an advisory capacity to the funding managers and provide recommendations and guidance.

f. A percentage of the funds should be allocated to the Department of Natural Resources for the coordination of the oversight committee, the compilation and distribution of the annual report / performance reviews, prepare and post documents for the public, and provide assistance to agencies that receive funding.

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(updated 01/12/09)

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