

**MINUTES  
STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD  
WALLACE STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
DES MOINES, IOWA  
MARCH 12, 1996**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Shirley Schermer, Chairperson  
Diane Ford-Shivvers  
Joel Hanes  
Robert Kindwall  
Jonathan Steege  
Lois Tiffany  
Larry Wilson

**ADVISORS PRESENT**

Dorothy Baringer  
Kathy Gourley  
Robert McKay  
Jan Nash  
Daryl Smith

**ADVISORS ABSENT**

Rebecca Conard  
Jane Hey

**STAFF PRESENT**

Daryl Howell  
John Pearson

**STAFF ABSENT**

Mike Carrier

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Schermer called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

## **APPROVE AGENDA**

The following adjustments were made to the agenda:

- Add: Item #11 - June Meeting
- Add: Item #12 - Signing in and Around Preserves

***Motion was made by Joel Hanes to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Lois Tiffany. Motion carried unanimously.***

## **APPROVE MINUTES**

Robert Kindwall asked that on Page 13, the last sentence under the Sylvan Runkel Preserve item be clarified to state that emergency phone (911) street addresses will be included on future preserve maps.

***Motion was made by Larry Wilson to approve the meeting minutes of December 19, 1995, as amended. Seconded by Robert Kindwall. Motion carried unanimously.***

## **STAFF ACTIVITY REPORT**

John Pearson and Daryl Howell reported that the following work was done on items on the 1996 Work Plan for State Preserves:

- John Pearson wrote draft management plans for the Sylvan Runkel Preserve.
- Daryl Howell revised and sent Inspection Forms to all preserve managers.
- John Pearson, Daryl Howell, Keith Dohrmann, Robin McNeely and Kevin Kane met to initiate transfer of Natural Areas Inventory database to GIS format.
- John Pearson, with assistance from Shirley Schermer, reviewed, approved, and authorized payment for three research reports for 1995-96.

### **Other Duties and Activities by Staff**

#### **Daryl Howell**

- Field review of the proposed trail through Strasser Woods State Preserve
- Completed title slides and draft script for the preserves slide program
- Submitted the annual report to the National Park service for National Natural Landmarks in Iowa: White Pine Hollow, Cayler Prairie, Hayden Prairie, and Cold Water Cave
- Ordered and distributed preserve boundary signs to preserve managers
- Completed Final Performance Report for Federal Aid concerning endangered species. Several of the studies were conducted on preserves.

- Worked with Keith Dohrmann and Sherry Baudler to develop new procedures for the division's environmental review program
- Started the review of the state endangered and threatened animal species for updating
- Major revision of Chapter 111 of the Iowa Administrative Code concerning scientific collecting and wildlife rehabilitation

### **John Pearson**

- Coordinated arrangements for dedication of Runkel Preserve
- Ecosystem Management Plans for Clear Lake, McIntosh Woods, Wildcat Den, Lake Ahquabi, and Backbone state parks
- Assisted with orientation and training for Keith Dohrmann on GIS computing and Natural Areas Inventory database management
- Review of rare plant information for upcoming revision of state threatened and endangered list
- Visit to Woodland Mounds State Preserve

### **RFP'S FOR RESEARCH FUNDS**

Daryl Howell reported that the Preserves Request for Proposals for 1996-97 was sent to over 50 colleges, individuals, and consultants in late January. As in the past, the funding for this program is dependent upon appropriations from the legislature. He noted that staff asked that proposals be in by the end of April.

Chairperson Schermer reviewed that at the last Board meeting it was decided to have a pre-review of the proposals by staff and other specific interests when RFP's are returned.

Mr. Howell noted that staff still plan to do that and there are people around the state with expertise staff can call on for help.

### **PRESERVES INSPECTION FORMS**

Daryl Howell stated that annual preserves inspection forms were modified to reflect the suggestions from Board members at the December meeting. He related that forms were sent to all preserve managers in early February and 15 have already been returned. He related that Pilot Grove mentioned they need a new area identification sign, and Fairfield Parks called and asked for some boundary signs. Another manager was concerned about brush encroachment.

### **PRESERVES SLIDE PROGRAM**

Daryl Howell stated that most of the slides for the preserves have been selected and staff will show some of the title slides later in the meeting. He related that staff have been working with Shirley Schermer on some of the archaeology slides and she is working on the text for that portion of the program.

## **NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY DATABASE**

John Pearson reported that the Natural Areas Inventory database has been copied into a Geographic Information System (GIS) format. He related that the department now has maps showing the distribution of rare plant and animal communities around the state and he will show examples of some of the maps at the end of the meeting.

Joel Hanes asked about data security.

Mr. Pearson indicated that, currently, only Natural Areas Inventory staff have access to this portion of information on the computer network.

Mr. Hanes asked if the security is going to remain intact.

Mr. Pearson replied that it is starting off that way but eventually staff would like to make some of the information available without jeopardizing the integrity of the database. He indicated that the database will not be on the Internet.

Discussion followed regarding the Internet and staff not having much time to explore it yet. Director Wilson reported that the department has entered information about the Director's office and each individual division on the Home Page. Eventually, much more information such as license information, rules, etc. will be entered on the Internet.

## **NATURAL HISTORY FORAY**

John Pearson reported that this year the Natural History Forays will be conducted in Waubonsie State Park on July 18-20, and in the Okoboji area on September 19-21. He noted that this year there are two forays and the intent is to take advantage of field trips the Native Plant Society has planned this year. He related that there will be an opportunity for people to do a natural areas inventory, botanizing, and looking for plants and animals. The first two days of each foray (Thursday and Friday) are set up in the traditional foray manner and the third day (Saturday) will be for the field trip with the Native Plant Society. Mr. Pearson suggested that the Board may want to hold the September Preserves Board meeting in the Okoboji area on the Wednesday just prior to the foray.

## **SYLVAN RUNKEL PRESERVE - UPDATE**

John Pearson stated that a draft management plan for the preserve has been sent to the Board and staff would like to get the Board's comments on it.

Chairperson Schermer commented that the management plan, in reference to the matrix on allowable uses, does not specify prohibited activities for visitor use.

Mr. Pearson noted that he will consult the matrix but a use that might be a problem is that of horseback riding on the Loess Hills wildlife area. He added that group horseback riding has not been allowed to date and that policy would remain in effect on the preserve. He related that it is not a compatible use on the steep, fragile environment of the ridge tops. Mr. Pearson pointed out that one condition of the area becoming a preserve was that the existing management plan of the wildlife area be continued.

Chairperson Schermer stated that even though horseback riding is currently prohibited on the area, it should be written into the management plan for the preserve so that if the management plan for the area changes over time, the prohibition of horseback riding in the preserve will remain in effect.

Chairperson Schermer asked that after these changes are made to the management plan that copies be sent to the Board members, prior to it going to the NRC for approval.

Discussion followed regarding brush encroachment on the area last year and the use of volunteers for hand eradication. Also discussed were details of the dedication ceremony scheduled for June 1.

### **June Meeting**

The Board decided to take up Item#11 - June Meeting, at this time.

It was decided to hold the next Board meeting in conjunction with the preserve dedication. The Board will meet on Friday, May 31, in Onawa at 2:00 p.m. Dedication will be held on Saturday, June 1, at 12:30 p.m.

Returning to Item #9, the following action was taken.

***Motion was made by Joel Hanes that the final management plan for the Sylvan Runkel Preserve be mailed to the Board members to approve, disapprove, or make changes and return to staff. Seconded by Jonathan Steege. Motion carried unanimously.***

Chairperson Schermer noted that the Board will take action on approval of the management plan at the May 31 meeting.

### **RESEARCH PROJECTS UPDATE**

Mr. Pearson reported that three of five 1995-96 research projects have been completed to date. He briefed the Board on the Hayden Prairie research work done by Paul Christiansen noting that most of the flora has remained relatively stable with some fluctuations. He noted that there were increases in certain forbs, particularly with late flowering species, and there were some decreases in a few grass species. Mr. Pearson discussed spring burning effects on Hayden.

Mr. Pearson stated that the archaeological survey of Searryl's Cave and Mericle Woods showed nothing significant found at the Mericle Woods site. He noted that at Searryl's Cave the study reconfirmed the presence of an archaeological site at the mouth of the cave. He related that this particular survey did not find any human remains but cultural artifacts were found.

Chairperson Schermer commented that there is evidence of human occupation and the presence of that needs to be taken into consideration in terms of use of the area and management considerations.

Director Wilson asked about monitoring research needs as referred to in Mr. Christiansen's report on Hayden Prairie.

Mr. Pearson indicated that Mr. Christiansen was making the case for continued research on the area but did not identify any specific project.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the effects of mowing, haying, burning, and possibly changing to fall burns, etc.

Joel Hanes commented that unless the area of a fall burn is monitored against an area of no fall burn, there is no way of knowing the effects of the burn. He suggested possibly contacting Paul Christiansen to ask him to put in a request for grant proposal to design a monitoring program for Hayden.

Mr. Pearson stated that any RFP should be opened up to others as well.

Discussion followed in regard to funding for specific projects or including this type of study in long term plans.

Mr. Pearson noted that the solicitation process has already begun for this year and he would prefer waiting until next year to give staff enough time to design a proposal specifically noting what the Board wants in terms of a study.

Chairperson Schermer asked John and Daryl to begin work over the next year to consult with experts in the field to aid in preparing a proposal.

### **Dr. Thomas Rosburg**

John Pearson introduced Dr. Thomas Rosburg, who gave a report on his results of a vegetation resurvey at Sheeder Prairie. Dr. Rosburg's report covered the following topics in detail:

- Timeline for Historical Activity on Sheeder Prairie
- Characteristics of Habitat Types Along Transects 1 & 2 in Sheeder Prairie
- Summary of Vegetation Dynamics on Sheeder Prairie from 1968 to 1995
- Overall Abundance of Species by Habitat Types

He summarized changes in community composition and the causes for changes that occurred. A total of 63 species changed significantly from 1968 to 1995; others did not change or changed less than 5 per cent. A copy of Dr. Rosburg's complete report is on file in the department's Preserves files.

Brief discussion followed.

### **SIGNING IN AND AROUND PRESERVES**

Robert Kindwall inquired as to who provides financing for preserves signs, noting that the squirrels are eating some of the plywood signs.

Mr. Howell replied that the cost of signs comes out of the division budget.

Mr. Kindwall stated that when the Board toured Berry Woods and Strasser Woods he noticed there were no signs until a person stumbles upon the property.

Mr. Howell stated that Berry Woods is owned by The Nature Conservancy so the department does not put up highway directional signs, since it is privately owned. He indicated that in regard to Strasser Woods, it is a little more difficult to put up directional signs in the city.

Mr. Kindwall asked what the procedure is on signing since some areas have signs and some do not.

Mr. Howell explained that the department places interpretive signs for preserves as to particular need, and directional signs on the highway are placed by DOT and it is up to them to determine placement of those signs. Mr. Pearson indicated that he will follow up with the DOT as to why there are no directional signs for Strasser Woods.

### **BOARD TOUR**

Board members toured Strasser Woods and Berry Woods on Monday, March 11, leaving the Wallace Building at 1:00 p.m.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Director Wilson distributed copies of the new "Iowa Geology 1995" booklet to each Board member.

With no further business to come before the State Preserves Advisory Board, Chairperson Schermer adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 12, 1996.

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