



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 request 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 close to home where Iowans can enjoy and appreciate healthy activities, nature, and Iowa's beauty. During the 2007 session, the Legislative Council appointed an Interim Study Committee to evaluate reports, statistical data, and funding recommendations to assess ways to address Iowa's needs for today, tomorrow, and the future.

What funding is needed?

The Advisory Committee reviewed and researched current budgets and current streams of funding and concluded from that research that an additional \$150 million per year, strategically used at state and local levels, will go a long way toward meeting the needs of Iowa's natural resources. The committee determined broad categories for the additional funding: parks and trails; soil and water conservation; and fish, wildlife, and natural areas. The Advisory Committee made a conservative estimate of the additional annual need based on solid research such as a comprehensive infrastructure and management needs assessment of state parks; analysis of current and projected demand for conservation cost share funds and REAP grant funds; the recommendations from the broad base of conservation professionals who contributed to the State Wildlife Action Plan; and other studies and analyses.

The following are the categories that were identified by the advisory committee where additional baseline funding should be used to meet current needs.

- **REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection).** \$20 million additional funds to meet the demands on REAP. The committee also recommends full funding of REAP to the authorized level. **This would provide a total of \$40 million from current and future sources.** This program provides moneys for projects that enhance our natural, cultural, and recreational resources across the state at multiple levels of government and management.
- **Local Conservation Partnership Program.** \$20 million for habitat protection and conservation, infrastructure needs, conservation education, and nature interpretation at the local level. 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 (\$12 million), nongovernmental organizations (\$5 million), and cities (\$3 million).
- **Watershed Protection.** \$20 million to improve and encourage 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.
- **Lakes Restoration.** \$10 million additional for lake restoration needs. Iowans value water quality and desire safe, healthy lakes that provide a full complement of aesthetic, ecological, and recreational benefits. Local involvement and watershed protection are essential components of all successful lake restoration projects.
- **Trails.** \$15 million for the addition of new hiking, walking, biking, and water trails, and maintenance of existing trails. At this time, Iowa's trails are owned and managed by various entities such as county conservation boards, the state, cities, and non-profit organizations. These state investments in trails will be able to leverage additional federal, local and private funds.
- **Natural Resources Management.** \$35 million additional to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for identified 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, recreational safety programs, etc. DNR is the state agency charged with conserving and enhancing Iowa's natural resources and providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities.

- **Agriculture and Land Stewardship.** \$30 million additional to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to meet the identified 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 incentives 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.

What are other states doing?

Many states are establishing or working toward ways to provide sustainable funding for their natural resources. On 11/02/07, leaders from other states presented to the Interim Committee and 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 them the 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.

Where are legislators on this issue?

On 01/28/08, the Interim Committee (IC) met and thoughtfully evaluated, discussed, and made decisions on the points of their draft report. All five items were approved unanimously and their recommendations will be presented to the Legislative Council.

- SF-IC #1: Charitable Conservation Contribution Income Tax Credit
- SF-IC #2: Conservative amount of \$150 million is needed for natural resources
- SF-IC #3: SF Advisory Committee reauthorization
- SF-IC #4: Create a constitutionally protected trust fund
- SF-IC #5: Funding mechanism chosen

This is good news! There is still much to do to get the word out to the public and provide support for our legislators for this history-making issue.

Where can I find out more about sustainable funding for natural resources?

There is information posted on websites that can update you on what is occurring with the Advisory Committee and the Legislative Interim Committee.

Sustainable Natural Resource Funding Advisory Committee website:
<http://www.iowadnr.gov/sustainablefunding/index.html>

Sustainable Natural Resource Funding Legislative Interim Committee website:
<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=212>