

# STATE PARKS FRIENDS GROUPS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

A Friends Group is a group of volunteers organized to assist in meeting the management goals of the Department of Natural Resources. This booklet is written to assist property managers in organizing and supporting a Friends Group.

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## **Introduction: Why Form a Friends Group**

In the last couple of decades we, as park managers, generally have operated under the concept of top down management. In this concept the Legislature decides how much money to give us; administrative support in Des Moines decides where to spend the money and area managers try to make do with whatever funds come their way. In a time of budget cuts and conflicting demands on tax receipts, we all know the limitations of this system.

An alternative system is using the funds we are given and then augmenting those funds with help from various groups in the community. Instead of thinking of the park as simply a cost center spending a fixed budget, the park can be looked at as a community of groups of people working together on park improvements, using whatever resources are available. Many groups of people both use the park and can contribute to the park. These groups are very diverse: campers, swimmers, bird watchers, equestrians. Boaters, anglers, nature lovers, etc. All these groups can contribute to the park, as well as be users of the park. We already have some groups participating in park improvement. Examples are campground hosts, the general public I carry in/carry out your trash, trail advisory groups, bass clubs, volunteer days and others.

Friends Groups are another manifestation of this principle. Many people want to become involved. They feel that they share ownership of public parks along with the other citizens of the state, and enjoy the experience of working and contributing in a park. A Friends Group organizes this enthusiasm and channels it into a beneficial relationship between the park and the people.

The park can benefit greatly from a Friends Group. However, a Friends Group should not be looked on as providing cost saving labor, but rather as providing a value added benefit to the park, a means of instilling pride and increased feeling of responsibility for stewardship of the park, its facilities and its resources. Friends enable the park staff to accomplish projects above and beyond what can be done without a Friends Group. Volunteers are not a substitute for paid staff. An example in Iowa parks is the Lewis Clark Festival, and the building of replica boats of the famous expedition. Without a Friends Group, this would never have happened, despite ambitious goals by the staff. Because of the Friends Group and its accomplishments at Lewis & Clark State Park, the public and citizens of the state have had many rewarding experiences at the park.

The park is not the only entity that will benefit. The people in the Friends Group also will have a richer and more rewarding relationship with their park. They will have a chance to contribute their skills and knowledge to make the state a better place for all of us. One of the great satisfactions in life can be undertaking a project that a person can look back on and say they made a significant improvement in other people's lives. We can be providing the opportunity for this experience.

Iowa's State Parks will only be as good as the people of Iowa want them to be. If we isolate park management from the people, we are only hurting ourselves. A Friends

Group is an excellent way to involve the local people in a park and increase their sense of ownership. Look at the park as a community, giving and taking from a variety of groups and people. This will lead to increased support that will be shown in many ways. There may be less litter, less vandalism, help in building projects, grant writing, more usage by families and groups and, also importantly, increased political support.

Friends Groups can be a challenge to an area manager. To manage as a community, our job is to get the ball rolling and to advise and direct people toward broad goals. Then a variety of groups will work together to attain a dynamic recreational resource called a park.

## **I. Function of Friends Groups**

Friends Groups are formed for many reasons. Some are formed to accomplish a specified project or activity, some for fund raising for park projects, some to tackle certain kinds of maintenance tasks in the park, some to provide general support to the park, some to involve marketing and promotions, and some for crises support and intervention (such as the threat of a park or facility closure). Whatever their reason for existence, they all have specific goals and realize that in order to accomplish those goals, they need support from other people and cooperation of the park staff.

Typically, groups are formed to fill an unmet park need, usually highly specialized or at least highly focused. They may be a special interest group such as the Sierra Club, an equestrian club, camping club, or a collection of special interest that need each other for support. Such activities as interpretation of the park's natural or cultural history, beautification of park grounds and facilities, and restorations of park structures are the most frequent reasons for establishing Friends Groups. They recognize that the park staff (whether because of a lack of staff or budgets or simply an unrecognized need), and they think they might be able to provide assistance in that regard.

It is well understood that the professional park staff is responsible for maintaining the park. However, if some extra things are going to be accomplished, volunteers will be needed to get them done. When these volunteers are organized and start working on their specific goals, they can really get things going. They need to feel they are providing a valuable service and that they are part of the overall team. A volunteer group can give extra meaning and life to the park. Where these friends groups are encouraged and active, the park tends to have an outlook that is more vibrant and vigorous. The group's existence encourages community involvement, and that makes the park more noticeable and fosters greater cooperation.

The park staff has the responsibility to work with the Friends Group to encourage and guide it in its goals, within the scope of the park bureau's policies. The Friends Group does not control the park's agenda or management. They supplement that agenda by providing input, skills and resources.

Although the major objective of the Friends Group is accomplishing the goals it has set for itself, it must remember its responsibilities of keeping its members and the public informed and coordinating with the park staff. Good communication is essential for public and administrative support and a successful outcome.

In order for a Friends Group to start off on the right foot and be most effective, a statement of purpose or mission must be jointly developed between the friends and the park management to give a strong sense of direction for the group to follow. This can be a fairly broad statement that will cover the basic purpose and has a wide appeal to many people or a narrowly focused statement seeking to accomplish one specific goal.

An example of a broad statement is: "The Friends mission is to be an advocate for the park, its programs and resources; to volunteer skills which will complement those of the park staff; and to advise the administration on issues of a programmatic nature."

An example of a narrowly focused statement is: "The mission of the Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill is to protect, restore, interpret, promote and find and preserve the history of the Mill and its operators."

Organized advocacy, complementary skills (not a replacement for paid staff), and programmatic (not policy) advice are in demand for any park. Collectively, they can reflect a level of support that is very dynamic and most effective at getting things accomplished.

It always is intriguing to observe the "can do" attitude of an active and effective Friends Group. It operates relatively unfettered compared with the rules, policies, procedures and chain of authority of established park agencies.

Please remember that no matter how diverse the function of the Friends Group, its one common denominator is commitment. There are no uncommitted Friends Groups. The park management simply needs to channel that commitment into beneficial programs. Overall, the real outputs of these groups are reduced tax burdens, extended life of the emphasized resources, an involved public, fuller lives and more rewarding avocations and careers.

## **II Developing & Sustaining Friends Groups**

### **A. Developing a Group**

Developing and sustaining a Friends Group can be a challenge and it will require extra work. There will, however, be benefits for the park; and the property manager will reap personal rewards in having met challenges and accomplished large goals.

The first thing to do in developing a Friends Group is to decide the focus of the group. The focus needs to meet the needs and objectives of the area, but it also must conform to the interest of the group. The goals may be very large as long as the project can be broken

into attainable and reasonable segments. The staff can develop goals to guide and direct the Friends Group, but also, the staff needs to be open to new ideas and challenges that may originate in the group.

The next step is recruiting people. There are many ways that this can be done. It may even be an incremental undertaking that takes several years before the efforts gel into an organized group. Some suggested avenues are: media exposure, word of mouth, approaching service clubs, approaching people one on one, and probably a combination of all of these.

In any community there are "movers and shakers." It helps if some of these people are members of the Friends Group. An attorney in the group can advise on legal concerns and perhaps contribute legal services. Community leaders add credibility and open doors.

Recruitment for new groups must avoid, if possible, members who would use the organization to advance personal agendas. It should be clear from the outset that a Friends Group exists to support its park, not to run it or set policy

## **B. Sustaining a Group**

Sustaining a Friends Group can be as challenging as getting a group organized. A clear understanding by the members of the purpose and goals of the group is necessary. The goals must be personally important to many of the members, and the group's activities must contribute to the accomplishment of the goals. Lack of activity or challenge for the group will cause members to lose interest.

As goals are accomplished, tokens of appreciation and recognition should be given to the individuals and groups who contributed. Praise is always appreciated, and a pat on the back or verbal compliment can mean a lot. Do not let hard work and commitment go unappreciated.

## **C. Manager Responsibilities**

The property manager also has some responsibilities in organizing and sustaining a group. He or she must ensure that the legal requirements are met. This may involve giving some guidance in setting up an organization as a nonprofit corporation. It will certainly require oversight to ensure that state and federal regulations, OSHA and safety and training requirements are met.

An employee's role with the Friends Group is to represent the DNR. He or she will act as an advisor, educator and friend assisting the group by ensuring compliance with area and DNR objectives.

Property managers need to have a list of achievable projects, objectives and concerns that are important and need the attention and support of the Friends Groups. This may require guidance for the group in selecting and organizing a special project. If the group does

undertake a special project, the property manager will probably be the person who is project manager, who ensures that all the committees and people and small projects come together to accomplish the larger goal.

Another aspect of an area manager's responsibility is recruiting, cultivating and retaining good leadership for the Friends Group. The quality of leadership in the Friends Group may determine if the group is successful. Leadership people can be identified and recruited. Ultimately, the success of the leadership will depend greatly on the quality and professionalism of the leadership provided by the property manager. The property manager needs to provide an atmosphere of cooperation and professionalism.

Managers also should look for additional funding sources to help with these projects. Applying for grants or soliciting for matching funds are options each manager should consider when selecting a project. The manager does not have to be the person who does the work; they may be able to have a volunteer from the Friends Group do the work in looking for other funds.

Managers will provide communication between themselves, their supervisors, Des Moines office staff and the Friends Group. Staff must constantly strive to keep communication open between the Friends Group and the supervisory staff. This communication will involve letting the friends know there are circumstances, conditions and restrictions that they need to be aware of. They will need to understand that park policies and budgets are restrictive. Park budgets are for the entire park operation and additional funds will be necessary to accomplish additional goals.

As a DNR employee you cannot hold office within the Friends Group. It is, however, appropriate to serve as a non-voting board member.

### **III. Managing Funds**

In order for a Friends Group to be effective, it must raise and spend funds. The following guidelines were developed to give property managers some direction.

#### **A. Friends Funds**

All money should be deposited in a bank account. Loose bills and change, or a "slush fund," are to be avoided. The Friends Group should have a treasurer who accepts all donations and receipts, accounts for them and deposits them in a bank account.

Expenditures should only be made in accordance with the organization's by-laws. The by-laws should have clear directions on who can spend funds and what authorization is needed. It is best if the park staff does not spend the funds, but only gives guidance. If the park staff is authorized by the Friends Group to make purchases, then all receipts shall be presented to the Friends Group treasurer.

## **B. Sales**

For the Friends Group members:

For your Friends Group to raise funds to support the park they may consider selling items in the park or recreation area. Guidelines need to be followed. The Friends Group will have to work with the park concessionaire if the park has a concession. If the park does not have a concession, then the Friends need to get permission to sell items on state property. The concession rules are covered in Iowa Administrative Code 571 - 14.

The Friends Group needs to decide, with the property manager's guidance, what it will sell, how much to charge, where it will be sold and how the proceeds will be utilized.

For park managers:

Park managers will, in all likelihood, find themselves staffing the sales area and selling items at times. You must secure approval from the Administration before selling items. In order to eliminate trouble always make a receipt for each sale. All receipts and proceeds shall be given to the treasurer or representative of the Friends Group. An inventory of items for sale shall be maintained so there can be an accounting between inventory and receipts.

All sale items should be purchased with the Friends Group's funds. Remember, an item with your park name or logo is excellent advertising.

## **C. Wishing Wells/Donation Boxes**

A box or wishing well is a great way to collect donations. They can generate additional funds for special projects. Here are some guidelines:

1. Only the Friends Group treasurer and park ranger shall handle money. Both the treasurer and ranger should count to verify the amount received. The treasurer then deposits the funds into the organization's bank account. The treasurer shall be present when the box is opened. If the park staff must empty the box, there should be a witness present.
2. Empty the box or wishing well frequently to discourage vandalism and theft.

## **D. Grants**

Grants can be a source of large funds that can have a significant impact on the feasibility of a project. There are many sources for grants and it is the responsibility of the Friends Group to locate grant sources. Once it is decided to apply for a grant, it must be coordinated with the ranger and the central office staff before the application is written. Many requirements go with grant writing.

## **E. Other Means of Raising Funds**

There are as many ways of fund raising as there are Friends Groups. Fund raising activities need to be appropriate. Activities of a questionable nature need to be avoided. Park rangers and their supervisors need to be kept informed of activities planned by the Friends Group.

Conclusion: Adhere to strict accounting of all funds. Make sure all expenditures are approved by the organization according to its by-laws. In general, have two people count receipts and sign for expenditures.

## **IV. Donations/Gifts**

### **A. Material Property**

The primary purpose of this chapter is to establish standardized guidelines for accepting and rejecting donations and gifts to the Parks, recreation and Preserves Division of the Department of Natural Resources. These guidelines will help increase the quality and the quantity of donations and gifts. They will provide clear guidance in negotiations with donors, allow the EDNR to assert legal ownership over donations and gifts, foster cordial donor relations and promote public confidence and trust in the Division.

### **1. Appropriate Gift**

It is up to each park or Friends Group to determine if a gift fits their needs and guidelines and can be accepted or must be rejected. Some points to consider are:

- a. Is the item consistent with the management plan of the park or area? Could the gift be utilized more appropriately at another park?
- b. Can appropriate care be given to the item?
- c. Will the item be utilized in the foreseeable future?
- d. Will the acceptance of a gift, in all probability, result in major future expenses for the park or area? Will the gift require maintenance that will be difficult to provide? Will the required maintenance be an acceptable or prohibitive cost burden?
- e. Will the gift be encumbered with conditions imposed by the donor regarding use or future disposition?

The above points will help in deciding if the donation or gift is appropriate or needed. If the answer is "No," then tactfully tell the donor that we appreciate the offer, but we will not be able to accept or utilize the gift because..., and give reasons. Perhaps suggest an alternative gift or donation that can be better utilized.

### **2. Budgetary costs**

Is additional funding needed to complete the entire project? For example: A gift of taxidermy mounts may require display cases in order to be protected and displayed

properly, thus requiring additional funding. These will require display cases in order to be protected and displayed properly so further funding is needed. If the answer to the question on additional funding is "YES," then you need to consider:

- a. Is the donor willing to gather additional funds to complete the project?
- b. Will the donor authorize putting dollars in an account, possibly managed by someone other than park personnel, until additional dollars are available to complete the project?
- c. Is it possible to get volunteer labor to complete the project?
- d. Is the gift of such value that the park can justify the expense from the park's funds?

### **3. Value of the gift**

- a. The donor may put a value on the gift. If the gift is to the state and is over \$50, it will need commission approval before acceptance. If the donation is to the Friends Group, there is no value limit. This also includes proceeds from a special event, and gifts of labor.
- b. Donated land must have commission approval.

### **4. Removing Items from a Park or Area - Transfer and Disposal**

- a. If the item is no longer relevant or useful at your particular area, can another area utilize the item? If the item is transferred to another park or area, a record of the transfer must be kept at the original location.
- b. Has the item deteriorated beyond usefulness?
- c. Donated gifts to the state can be demolished, transferred and disposed of through normal channels, such as the spring sale process. This should only be done as a last resort and if there are not restrictive covenants on the donation that preclude this activity.

### **5. Recognition**

- a. The donor may have a plaque engraved and placed on a donated item. The plaque may state the name of the donor, the location the item was donated to, and the date. Display of the plaque must be approved by the Natural Resource Commission. The cost of the plaque is the responsibility of the donor.
- b. Donations of items with a value over \$50 will be recognized in the Commission minutes along with a thank you letter from the Director.
- c. The area manager must ensure that appropriate recognition is given. This may be a thank you letter from the area if the value is under \$50.
- d. Anonymous donations or gifts need documentation for DNR records.

Determining the appropriate level of authority for the acceptance of items may have to be made on the basis of such factors as size, number of items, value, and cost of maintenance and restriction of use. Communication with the District and Central Office staff on this determination is a necessity.

## **6. By-laws**

- a. The by-laws of the Friends Group shall state that all donations given and accepted by the Friend group are to be used for the benefit of the park, and if the group dissolves, all donations become the property of the State of Iowa.

## **7. Legal Title**

When a material donation is accepted, the donor should sign a release of the item to the state of Iowa. This prevents the donor, the family or associates taking the items back at a future time. Appendix B & C.

### **B. Volunteer Labor**

Volunteers are an important part of the operations in a state park, recreation area or preserve. Volunteers can and will complete tasks that otherwise would not be done because of time and staffing constraints. Generally, volunteer labor can be utilized for special projects that have value to the volunteers and the area.

Volunteers, while working on the area, must follow the guidelines and policies of the State of Iowa. All OSHA guidelines and child labor laws must be met. Volunteers must be given training on equipment operations if they are to operate equipment. Volunteers need to know all safety rules and emergency procedures. MSDS sheets must be provided to volunteers where appropriate.

Volunteers can drive state vehicles and use state equipment if they are qualified and properly trained. If a volunteer is to drive a state vehicle he/she must be given written permission.

Appendix A is the appropriate form to use for volunteer labor and to give written permission to drive a state vehicle.

## **V. Legal Considerations**

There are various legal considerations that should be looked at while developing your Friends Groups. The following paragraphs explain some of the legal considerations. A strong suggestion would be to enlist a lawyer when developing your Friends Group. You can not charge lawyer fees to the state, but their work can be considered a donation to the Friends Group.

### **A. Non-profit organization**

When developing Friends Groups, you are in a sense developing a corporation to handle the affairs of the organization. Chapter 504! Is the Iowa Nonprofit Corporation Act which spells out what is needed to develop a nonprofit corporation. Some issues of particular importance are:

## 1. The By-laws for the group

According to the definitions in Chapter 504A, "by-laws are defined as the code or codes of rules adopted for the regulation or management of the affairs of the corporation irrespective of the name or names by which such rules are designated."

These are the rules that govern the Friends Group. Section 504A.12 defines what must be in the by-laws.

## 2. Articles of Incorporation

The "Articles of Incorporation" for the organization must be developed to be considered a nonprofit corporation. Section 504A.29 defines what the Articles of Incorporation shall set forth:

- a. The name of the corporation and the chapter of the Code or session laws under which it is incorporated.
- b. The period of duration if for a limited period, but in the absence of any statement in the articles of corporations organized hereunder shall have perpetual duration.
- c. The purpose or purposes for which the corporation is organized.
- d. Any provision, not inconsistent with law, which the incorporators elect to set forth in the articles on incorporation for the regulation of the internal affairs of the corporation, including any provision for distribution of assets on dissolution or final liquidation. "This **must** be included to obtain tax exempt status from the IRS.)
- e. The address of its initial registered office including street and number, (post office box addresses are not acceptable) if any, the name of the county in which the registered office is located, and the name of its initial registered agent or agents at such address.
- f. The number of directors constituting the initial board of directors and the names and addresses of the persons who are to serve as the initial directors.
- g. Any provision not inconsistent with law or the purposes for which the corporation is organized, which the incorporators elect to set forth; or any provision limiting any of the corporate powers enumerated in this chapter.
- h. The date on which the corporate existence shall begin, which may be any date identified by year, month and day not more than 90 days in the future. In the absence of any statement in the articles as to date of beginning of corporate existence, such existence shall commence on the date on which the secretary of state issues the certificate of incorporation.
- i. The name and address of each incorporator.

These articles are filed with the Secretary of State and recorded at the office of the county recorder in which the registered office is located.

It shall not be necessary to set forth in the articles of incorporation any of the corporate powers enumerated in this chapter.

Unless the articles of incorporation provide that a change in the number of directors shall be made only by amendment to the articles of incorporation, a change in the number of directors made by amendment to the bylaws shall be controlling. In all other cases, whenever a provision of the articles of incorporation is inconsistent with a bylaw, the provision of the articles of incorporation shall be controlling.

### 3. Tax liability

"Articles of Incorporation" and the "Bylaws" are imperative for the Friends Group to operate properly, especially dealing with funds and donations. This brings up the issue of tax liability. Chapter 501 of the IRS code deals with exempt organizations. Depending of the Purpose of your Friends Group, it could fall into one of these categories under 501©:

( c )3. Corporations, and any community chest, fund or foundation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing, for public safety, literacy or educational purposes, or to foster national or international amateur sports competition (but only if no part of its activities involve the provision of athletic facilities or equipment), or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals, no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided in section (h), and which does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

( c )6. Business leagues, chambers of commerce, real-estate boards, board of trade, or professional football leagues (whether or not administering a pension fund for football players), **not organized for profit and no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.**

( c )7. Clubs organized for pleasure, recreation, and other non-profitable purposes, substantially all of the activities of which are for such purposes and no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder.

You should also refer to Chapter 504B of the Iowa Cede titled "nonprofit Corporations and Federal Tax Liability," specifically;

#### 504B.3 Avoiding tax liability.

The articles of incorporation of every such corporation shall be deemed to contain a provision requiring such corporation to distribute, for the purposes specified in its articles of incorporation, for each taxable year, amounts at least sufficient to avoid liability for the tax imposed by section 4942(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

You should work with a tax consultant when developing your Friends Group to make sure you meet the requirements. These services might be donated by a local attorney who shares in the desire to see a Friends Group established.

#### **4. General liability of the corporation.**

One of the biggest concerns everyone has is liability.

Section 504A.101 addresses personal liability.

Except as otherwise provided in this chapter a director, officer, employee, or member of the corporation is not liable on the corporation's debts nor obligation and a director, officer, member, or other volunteer is not personally liable in that capacity, for a claim based upon an act or omission of the person performed in the discharge of the person's duties, except for a breach of intentional misconduct or knowing violation of the law, or for a transaction from which the person derives an improper personal benefit.

#### **B. Insurance**

Insurance for Friends Groups or non profit corporations is an issue that needs to be considered, but no requirements are stated. Professional opinion from insurance personnel suggests you should have some type of general liability insurance, especially if your group has a checking account or does organized special events. Talk to an insurance agent to see what is best for your organization.

#### **C. Workers Compensation**

Another issue is Worker's Compensation for Friends Group volunteers. According to the Iowa Department of Personnel, any non-paid person or volunteer working for the state is treated just like a state employee when considering Workers Compensation. If a person is injured while working for the state, he/she must file a report and do the proper paper work to be considered for Worker's Compensation. It will be up to the Worker's Compensation division to cover the injury claim or not. This procedure is the same for everyone.

#### **D. 28E Agreements**

There is a chapter in the Code of Iowa that may be of assistance in developing a Friends Group for your area:

Chapter 28E.1. Joint Exercise of Governmental Powers

Purpose: The purpose of this chapter is to permit state and local governments in Iowa to make efficient use of their powers by enabling them to provide joint services and facilities with other agencies and to cooperate in other ways of mutual advantage. This chapter shall be liberally construed to that end.

## Chapter 28E.4. Agreement with other agencies

Any public agency of this state may enter into an agreement with one or more public or private agencies for joint or cooperative action pursuant to the provisions of this chapter including the creation of a separate entity to carry out the purpose of the agreement. Appropriate action by ordinance, resolution or otherwise pursuant to law of the governing bodies involved shall be necessary before any such agreement may enter into force.

District Supervisors and the Division Administrator need to be consulted before pursuing a 28E agreement for your Friends Group. An example of a 28E agreement is the operation of the annual Fort Atkinson Rendezvous special event. The city of Fort Atkinson and the DNR have entered into a 28E agreement and developed a Friends of Fort Atkinson group to operate the rendezvous event. This group handles all revenues, expenses and other operations dealing with the event. The group's responsibilities are listed within the agreement. The agreement has made the Rendezvous special event more efficient to prepare for, and the revenues collected are used to pay the event expenses.

Conclusion: This chapter has touched on some of the major legal issues that need to be considered when developing a Friends Group. You would be strongly advised to have a lawyer involved in setting up your Friends Group and to answer legal questions. It would be in the best interest of your group and all parties involved.

## **VI. Case Studies**

When undertaking a new challenge it is always useful to see how other people meet the same challenge. We can learn from them by studying how they did it. We also can pick and chose what applies to our situation and may even avoid some of their mistakes. To make this possible, several case studies have been compiled.

In looking over the following case studies, you will see that no two are alike. Every Friends Group began in a different way. Some groups were started by park users, some by park staff; some have been around almost forever, some are fresh and new. The most successful groups have a clear focus and good leadership.

Look at what these Friends Groups have accomplished. It is truly astounding.

### **Friends of Beeds Lake**

#### **By John Ripperger**

The Friends of Beeds Lake organization was formed in November 1992 by a long time angler at the lake.

The group is a non-profit, incorporated group. All raised funds are spent on the park. Gifts to the group are tax deductible. Its yearly fund raiser is on the Fourth of July. In the morning, the group sponsors an omelet breakfast at the park. Events such as kite flying,

cribbage tournament, horseshow tournament and anything else to bring people to have fun, are going on all day in the area.

Meetings are held once a month with advance publicity so that anyone wanting to attend can. This is when ideas are tossed around about what needs to be done and how to spend any money raised. The park ranger is not a voting member. He attends meetings to observe and to serve as a liaison with the central office. So far, the Friends always have asked my opinion. If I tell them the idea is not practical or have another reason why the idea would not be good for the area, they have dropped the idea.

With the money raised, they have purchased two electric hand dryers for the shower house, two large grills (one for each shelter) and material to build a bicycle rack. They also purchased a handheld radio for Th3 Park the park after hearing that my night watchman had been assaulted. They also help in other ways such as clean-ups after storms, getting donations for projects, pouring cement and helping erect buildings.

In 1991 the SCS office tried to obtain grants for working on the watershed of the lake, but was turned down. The first project that the Friends worked on was to see if they could get the watershed project started. Within one year they had obtained grants totaling \$1,000,000. They are now checking on ways to get money to dredge the lake.

The purpose of the group is to better the park. Immediately after forming the group, members went to all the civic groups in the area and got their backing. Using TV, radio and the area newspapers they generated a lot of interest in the park. Next they got a commission meeting scheduled for Hampton and had a meeting with them at the park. Out of this meeting, we were promised a new shelter if the Friends would furnish the labor for the building, 15 viewing benches for the trail around the lake, electricity for the existing shelter providing the Friends would do the digging for the underground wire and an information kiosk for the camp area. I had been trying to get all of these projects done for over 20 years.

The Friends have been a positive force in the area and I hope that they will continue to have a positive impact in the future.

## **Friends of Pine Lake**

### **By Larry Kenyon**

Promoting Pine Lake State Park has been a part of the Eldora community since 1930 when the first Eldora Community Club, later the Eldora Chamber of Commerce, was organized. At that time, a separate committee was established to promote the state park.

Through the years it has been known as the Pine Lake Promotion Committee, the Pine Lake Improvement Committee and most recently as the Friends of Pine Lake.

In 1985, the group was revitalized. Letters were sent to all organizations in the community asked if they would like to appoint a representative to the committee. At that

time the committee was reorganized with 12 representatives. Today the committee has 10 members and is looking at expanding the membership in the future.

The purpose of the group, initially, was to provide community input concerning possible improvements at the park, as well as offering volunteers to assist in projects which the park staff did not have the manpower to complete. In 1989, the main project at Pine Lake State Park consisted of the bridge and dam replacement project at the Lower Lake. At that time, the community support group was named Friends of Pine Lake and worked with the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Transportation in communicating with the public the progress of the reconstruction. When the construction work was completed, Friends of Pine Lake organized an area-wide celebration, complete with ribbon cutting and a free community picnic. That event, attended by a number of state dignitaries, was held on September 1, 1991.

On the bridge/dam reconstruction was completed, the Friends of Pine Lake decided to encourage the DNR to remove the four sandstone cabins which had been closed for use by the public for 20 years (due to the crack in the dam), and open them again to the public. The group offered volunteer labor to the DNR, who basically could not accept such an offer due to a variety of reasons. However, they were able to proceed more quickly with the project and when the cabins were opened, one was decorated for the Christmas holiday and included in Eldora's annual holiday tour of homes, providing the community an opportunity to see the newly remodeled cabins.

During 1995, the Friends of Pine Lake designed a special logo for Pine Lake which was created by a local artist. This logo was used on a banner in conjunction with the Iowa State Parks 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary that year. Through the sale of caps and T-shirts, the committee is able to finance most of its projects even though it is considered a non-profit organization. Friends of Pine Lake has completed work on its incorporation papers which will be filed soon.

Our intention is to expand the number of people on the committee and to serve as needed. The group works with the park ranger and his area supervisor. It planned a special celebration in 1997 to recognize the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the park.

The group works on projects from clean up to community communications, and works cooperatively with the DNR and its representatives. The future of the Friends of Pine Lake is positive and looks as though this group will serve to provide a viable connecting link not only with Pine Lake State Park but throughout the area.

## **Friends of the Mines of Spain**

### **By Wayne Buchholtz**

The Friends of the Mines of Spain was formed in 1994. I contacted the Dubuque Audubon Society and the Sierra Club to gain interest in support of the Mines of Spain. The idea was to solicit an organization to accept cash donations for the park. Neither organization was interested, but through these contacts several members came to the park interested in starting a Friends Group. Within a week of the initial contacts, a board was

formed and a name was created: Friends of the Mines of Spain. Since the initial meeting, this group has set by-laws and is preparing to file for tax except status and set up a gift shop at the E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center.

Interpretive activities are a main focus. The Friends Group accepts monetary donations and utilizes them for displays, signs, program materials, prairie restoration, trail development and other related activities and projects. The amount of effort each member contributes shows that the program activities and projects have evolved into a major interpretive source for the local schools and civic groups. The Friends volunteer their time for programs and other events. While being focused on the interpretive center, the Friends continue to assist in the development of the entire park.

The Friends also solicit donations through memberships and other donations. They search for materials to be donated for the completion of projects on trails and displays in the center.

Recent purchases by the Friends are: a mounted bald eagle, white tailed deer, bobcat, buffalo and others for displays. They have funded the creation of butterfly gardens, prairies, and an amphitheater, a lighted walk way to the center, floating trail, interpretive signs and many other activities.

It has been important to develop a group purpose and to stay on focus. The group consists of about 35 members. All have been a driving force in helping the park to make each visit enjoyable experiences for all that come.

### **Friends of Discovery Lewis & Clark State Park**

**By Ron Williams**

This Friends Group was established in 1985 to provide an organization of volunteers to fund and build a replica of the "keelboat" used by the Lewis & Clark Expedition as they traveled up the Missouri River in 1804, exploring the newly acquired Louisiana Territory

Originally, the group had about 35 members who were not charged dues but were asked to support the project with their labor, some fund raising and some other means of assistance. Funding was raised, initially, solely by donations but now is accomplished primarily through sales from a food stand operated during the Lewis & Clark Festival held annually at Lewis & Clark State Park. The DNR provided assistance through donation of the wood for the boat from one of the state forest sawmills and the use of the park equipment, shop and facilities for construction of the boats.

This group accomplished its original objective of building the keelboat in a little over three years. In the next three years, the members built replicas of the two pirogues which also were a part of the fleet used by the explorers. All three boats are now on exhibit in the park during the summer months and are one of the main attractions at the annual Lewis & Clark Festival. They also have been used in five Lewis & Clark documentary films (two for TV) and two other TV programs about early American history. They

continue to attract considerable attention from travelers retracing this famous route on the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail. This has resulted in some national recognition as the interest in Lewis & Clark history continues to grow.

The Friends of Discovery did incorporate as a non-profit corporation, has a slate of officers and a couple other board members who meet a couple times each year to discuss business matters. They regularly work together during the spring to get the boats ready for summer exhibit. They also help with preparations and demonstrations during the festival, programs, tours, filings and other special events involving the boats. The group is a non-profit corporation and handles all its own funds independently of the state purchasing requirements.

After 12 years, we have only about four of the original members left but membership is still about 10-12 people who continue to maintain the boats for summer exhibit. Since the wood in the boats is deteriorating after being in the lake for the past 10 summers, the Friends are changing their focus from an on-water display to a more permanent inside exhibit. This will require development, fund raising and construction of a large building to serve as a storage/visitor center facility.

As a ranger I look for this group to be instrumental in adding to the park's heritage with this new facility.

### **Onawa, Lewis & Clark Festival Committee Lewis & Clark State Park**

**By Ron Williams**

This committee was formed in 1985 as an operational committee of the Onawa Chamber of Commerce to organize, develop, promote and undertake, in coordination with the Iowa DNR and the park staff, a festival at Lewis & Clark State Park. This festival was planned not only to promote the Lewis & Clark heritage of the park but also to promote the park and the Onawa community. It operates independently but is a part of the Onawa Chamber of Commerce for legal purposes. The Chamber of Commerce Secretary represents its interests at all meetings and handles some of the correspondence. The committee is composed of a chair, a treasurer, the Chamber secretary, the DNR park ranger and four to five members who each handle various responsibilities with the festival.

Funding is supplied by the committee's activities before, during and after each festival. Money is raised through a craft show prior to Christmas each year and through a buffalo burger feed, a pancake feed, souvenir and T-shirt sales during the annual festival and some corporate donations. All bills and revenue are channeled to the committee treasurer for their action.

This committee has operated successfully for over 12 years and now has a regionally significant event that attracts between 16,000 and 18,000 people to the park for festival activities. They do change members and chair periodically and continue to provide a high quality event. This has placed a considerable extra burden on the park staff through the

years which, when coupled with park staff cutbacks in recent years, has forced the committee to take over more and more responsibility.

The DNR is interested in seeing the event continue but would like the committee to take over the event completely. The park simply does not have the staff time to commit to this event like they used to.

### **Friends of Springbrook Springbrook State Park**

**By Tammy Domonoski**

The group was founded in 1994. To form this group I gathered a list of names of local people, businesses and organizations that my co-workers knew may be interested in such a group. I also spoke to many park users, campers and neighbors, I wrote letters to local 4-H clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, church groups and FFA organizations. The 75 anniversary Open House was another opportunity to gather names. At this event a local 4-H club donated dollars and several campers became interested in forming a Friends Group. As a result, several local groups, park users, retired individuals, schools and clubs donated their time. Local businesses donated materials, park users built and installed a kiosk, retired individuals donated materials and time to repair beach house soffits, 4-H clubs painted buildings and parking posts, school groups have propagated prairie seeds, helped construct a handicapped accessible trail, prairie management, trail maintenance, painting and other general maintenance tasks.

The Education Center provides a unique opportunity of utilizing school groups to complete service projects as part of their activities at the Education Center.

Local campers have been instrumental in starting the process to add and upgrade campground electricity. These individuals have not taken the plunge to file non-profit status or to become incorporated simply because we are not sure of the procedures.

### **Friends of Pine Creek Grist Mill Friends of Melpine School Wild Cat Den State Park**

**By Ken Hyman**

Wild Cat Den State Park has three historical structures: the Pine Creek Grist Mill, Melpine Country School and the old iron bridge at the mill. Two of these structures have Friends Groups dedicated to their presentation and restoration and the preservation of the cultural heritage associated with them.

These groups came about over a period of months. It was realized by the park staff that the only way to preserve this heritage was through a Friends Group. With this thought in mind the staff began in 1995 to collect the names of interested people. This was done primarily through word of mouth. In the spring of 1996, a special effort was made to get

publicity on the two buildings. The publicity included TV, radio and newspaper coverage. Because of this wide exposure, a number of people called the park voicing an interest.

In the fall of 1996 a meeting date was selected and a mailing was sent to everyone who had stated an interest. Additional media coverage of the meeting brought out more people. Several dozen individuals attended the organizational meeting in October.

Since that time the two groups have further organized with committees to work on various projects. Newsletters came out in January of 1997, research is being done, members are recruited and fund raisers planned. The mill group has held work days and the mill's turbine has been removed. Sandblasted and repair work started.

Officially the two Friends Groups are committees of the Muscatine County Heritage Association which is already incorporated as a non-profit group. This has relieved the Friends Groups of some legal expense and paperwork.

In the short two months of their existence the two groups have set ambitious goals of getting the grist mill to run and developing the school into a historical interpretive site. With their enthusiastic support and work they will develop first class attractions at a fraction of the cost that would incur to the state without their help.

## **Wapsipinicon State Park**

**By Mike Brewer**

Our recent donations of funds to construct a lodge came from the Anamosa Rotary Club. It was its idea to build a shelter in the Anamosa area that could be used year-around for functions. The Rotary Club is a nonprofit group and is affiliated state wide. Their funds come from fund raises held during the year. They purchased the materials as I needed them and as funds were available. It took two years to complete the funding but they were totally dedicated to the project until it was completed. They have about 25 members who are all active. As far as the future of their group, I am sure they will stay active in both local projects and also maybe another park project if we come up with one.

The other group we have just started working with is the Anamosa Jaycees. They wanted to "Adopt a Park" in regard to providing playground equipment. They have had a couple fund raisers and have been told by Wal Mart that they would match whatever was raised.

## **South Bluff Friends, Inc. Bellevue State Park**

The South Bluff Friends was organized for the betterment of the South Bluff Nature Center in Bellevue State Park. The year of incorporation was 1989. Membership was open to the public but only four people have ever been members and the meetings were not publicized. These four people raised money with butterfly pin sales, a wishing well and a

fish fry. The fish fry was quite successful and the money raised allowed the group to donate several pieces of office equipment to the nature center/park. Two of the members and officers of the group were DNR employees. The group is somewhat inactive now. There are no dues and no formal membership application.

### **Friends of Lacey-Keosauqua State Park**

The Friends of Lacey-Keosauqua State Park was organized in 1995. Its purpose is to support the park including increasing public awareness and use and encouraging public participation in restoration, enhancement and preservation work.

The group began with 20 members and now has 21 members. These people have assisted the park in maintaining signs, with the concession and in giving a voice to the public for input to the park.