

Iowa State Parks & Recreation Areas

2011 Annual Report



May 1, 2012

Roger L. Lande, Director
Iowa Department of Natural Resources



A Message from the State Parks Bureau Chief....

First and foremost, 2011 further affirmed for me the high quality of employees, volunteers, and visitors that Iowa has within its state parks. Because all of these people successfully worked within their respective venues, some of the most trying economic times did not cause Iowa to consider closing any state parks. Not all states can say this. We, however, closed Wilson Island State Recreation Area for the entire year because an epic Missouri River flood placed up to eight feet of water over the area for four months. This same flood resulted in the temporary closure of Lewis and Clark State Park and the campground in Lake Manawa State Park due to the constant threat of flood waters breaking through levees.

The state's economic hardships did not deter people from visiting state parks. Statewide numbers remained fairly stable for camping and overall park visitation compared to recent previous years. While I do not have valid data to back me up, I believe there are two basic reasons that state park visits have remained strong. First, fuel prices are causing people to recreate closer to home. Rather than packing up and traveling hundreds of miles, people are choosing to stay closer to home which means they are likely getting reacquainted with state and county parks. Second, state parks provide a relatively inexpensive retreat for people seeking a break from daily stressors caused by hard economic times.

In eight years, Iowa will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of its state parks system. Iowa's first state park, Backbone, was dedicated in 1920. We anticipate that Iowa's state parks will have a spotlight on them throughout 2020. For this reason, we've established an initiative named "State Parks 2020" with the basic goal of having all parks in premier condition by our 100th birthday. The state legislature in 2011 provided \$5 million for the second consecutive year to improve state park facilities. Meanwhile, the Iowa Parks Foundation continues to work on establishing solid footing to raise significant money from private sources and become a vital partner in making State Park 2020 a success.

Iowans, along with people throughout the nation, are increasing their awareness of the value in becoming a healthier population. Governor Branstad has announced a goal for Iowa to become the healthiest state in the nation in five years. We in state parks understand our important role in people's health since we host a myriad of physical outdoor recreation activities and provide places for mental uplifting. Iowa State Parks is building a working relationship with the Iowa Department of Public Health with the preliminary task of better understanding the roles of our respective disciplines and determining ways we can work together in achieving Governor Branstad's goal.

In closing, I invite all Iowans and our visitors to take advantage of Iowa State Parks. Whether you have a few hours, days, or weeks to spend in a park, I assure you can find plenty of enjoyment, relaxation, and refreshment while at a traditional state park such as Palisades-Kepler or partaking in a much more modern experience at Honey Creek Resort Park. Many people make state parks a tradition for family reunions, weddings, and other social gatherings. If you currently don't have a state park tradition, we invite you to begin one in 2012 among the scenic beauty of the outdoors!!

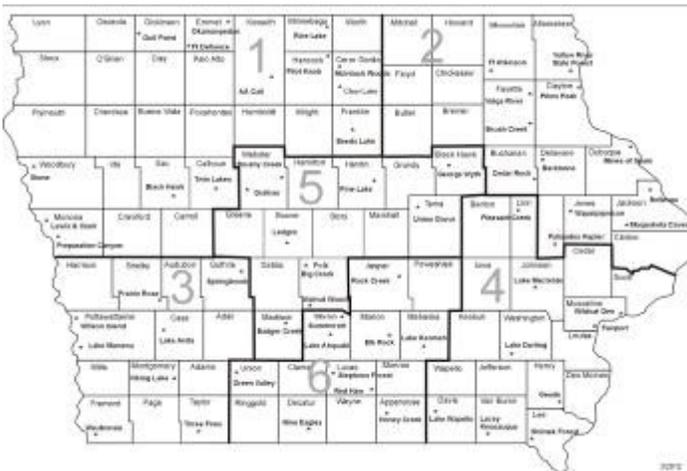


Kevin R. Szcodronski



Iowa's state parks and recreation areas are managed by the State Parks Bureau. The bureau is encompassed within the Conservation and Recreation Division of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The state park system is divided into six districts, each district overseen by a district park supervisor. The state parks bureau currently has 90 full time personnel. This figure reflects the loss of 19 full time permanent positions over the last three years.

In October 2011, Park Ranger Steve Bell (Brushy Creek and Dolliver) and Park Ranger Bob Schaut (Big Creek) retired.



Today's staffing structure of the state park system includes:

- 1 -- Bureau Chief
- 2 -- Executive Officer II
- 1 -- Administrative Assistant
- 6 -- District Park Supervisors
- 33 -- Park Managers
- 28 -- Park Rangers
- 7 -- Natural Resource Technicians
- 1 -- Museum Technician (Cedar Rock)
- 2 -- Sign Shop Staff
- 3 -- Trails Crew
- 4 -- District Secretaries
- 2 -- Education Center Maintenance Staff

A vital element in state park and recreation area operations is the recreation aide position. Typically, over 300 recreation aides are hired on a seasonal basis to provide everything from basic grounds and facility maintenance to interpretive program presentation, and night watchperson. The number of positions and number of hours have been very volatile

in the last three years as the budget item for seasonal help has been adjusted to meet projected budget targets and additional budget reductions that have occurred. In 2011, the number of recreation aides was down to 86. The legislature recognized the value and need for these seasonal positions and passed legislation in 2011 that required the department to hire 50 FTE of seasonal help. With this legislation, additional help was hired in July 2011 and the total number of seasonal help increased to 175 positions.

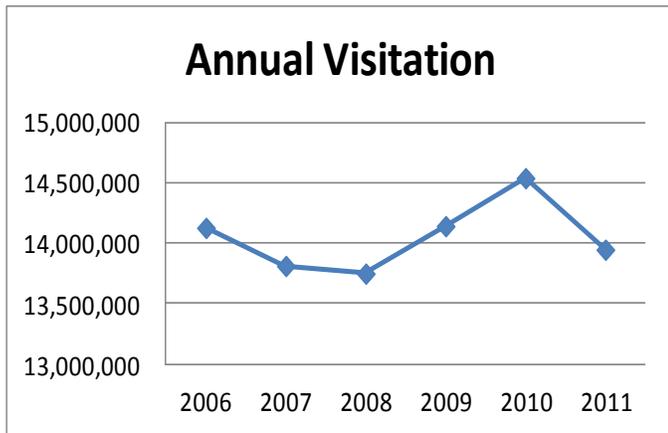
Prison crews are used where possible and feasible. In 2011 prison labor was used at Viking Lake State Park, Rock Creek State Park, and Elk Rock State Park. Lastly, the parks have relied heavily on volunteer labor to help keep the parks open and maintained.



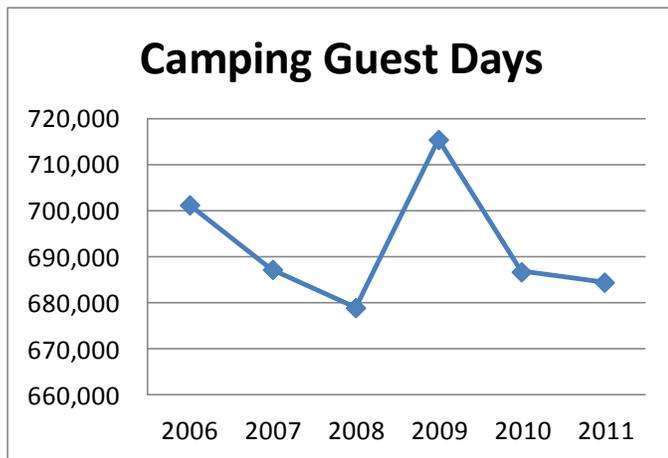
2011 Iowa State Parks Bureau Staff.

VISITATION

During these tough economic times, millions of people continue to use Iowa's state parks. The overall park visitation was down slightly in 2011. Park visitation for the year was 13,947,950 (down 4% from 2010) and camping guest days were 684,417 (down 1% from 2010). The decrease can be attributed to severe storms, heavy rainfall in areas, flooding of the Missouri River, high water levels, and some major construction projects including lake draw downs at Green Valley and Lake Darling state parks. A breakdown of 2011 visitation by park can be found in the report supplement as well as a summary of the last 10 years for visitation and camping guest days.



Lewis & Clark State Park was closed over concern of flooding but was spared except for minor damage to campsites and water lines near the lake. Lake Manawa State Park campground was closed as a precaution due to the high river level and proximity to the levee system. The park stayed open for day use. Saturation of the land and the high lake level created great concern from the adjacent homeowners. The DNR pumped water out of the lake to help alleviate the potential for flooded basements of those homeowners at a cost of \$284,171.



Uprooted trees at Union Grove State Park.

Weather had a major impact on park use in a number of areas in 2011. The Missouri River flooding had a significant impact on the river parks in western Iowa, Wilson Island State Recreation Area sustaining the most damage. To date, the park is still closed and it is not known exactly when it will be re-opened for use.

Severe storms also caused havoc in two parks in southwest Iowa, Viking Lake and Lake of There Fires. The result was damage to roofs, windows, siding, trees, and campers. Sustained straight line winds hit Union Grove State Park resulting in 90% of the trees being uprooted or damaged.



Wilson Island shelter area along the Missouri River before and after. Silt and sand nearly 8 feet tall was deposited in the area.



Fifteen families displaced by Missouri River flooding took up residence at Waubonsie State Park for most of the summer. Other parks in the northwest district saw an increase in use because of the Missouri River flood. Some parks along the Minnesota border also saw an increase in use when the Minnesota state park system was shut down in July because of no budget.

In northeast Iowa, 2011 was the first year in many that parks did not have to close campgrounds or entire parks in the wake of significant wind or rain events. Maquoketa Caves continues to struggle with low visitation numbers. In 2010, access to the caves was closed in an effort to help slow a disease known as white nose syndrome that is killing bats across the eastern half of the United States. The caves, which were closed as a precaution and based on the recommendation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are known to serve as bat hibernation sites. The department will continue to monitor the situation.

RESERVATIONS

Since 2006, park patrons have been able to make reservations for camping, cabins, day-use lodges, and open picnic shelters on the state park reservation system. While the system was well received by the public who used it, there were limitations on financial reporting and reconciliation. After much work by staff to put together financial requirements for the original vendor to use to make necessary changes, the vendor did not feel enough information was provided for them to move forward. Department management decided to prepare a request for proposal for a new vendor to provide a turn-key reservation system that would address the financial reporting and reconciliation issues associated with the original system.

Five potential bidders attended a mandatory vendor's conference in 2010. Two bids were received. In July 2010, the Natural Resource Commission approved a contract with Active Network, Inc. for the "second generation state parks reservation system" and call center. The Active Network has 25 years of experience serving the parks industry and supports 41 state, federal, and county park systems.

The new system launched February 17, 2011. An-

other change to reservations was the increase in the percentage of reservable campsites. Staff now have the ability to increase their reservable campsite percentages if so desired. Staff took advantage of this change and increased the percentage of reservable campsites to 60%, 65%, or 75% in one-third of the campgrounds on the reservation system.



Park patrons made 35,800 reservations in 2011 which is down slightly from 2010. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the reservations were made by customers using the online system which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Cancellations in 2011 totaled 3,361. Customers are now able to cancel reservations themselves online and 64% of the cancellations were done online by customers. Six hundred fifty-four (654) reservation changes were completed through the call center. It is anticipated that customers will be able to make online reservation changes themselves through the internet in 2012. A summary of reservations statistics since the reservation system began can be found in the report supplement.

CONCESSIONS

Ten long standing concession operations provide park visitors with a variety of concession services including snack food, convenience store items, firewood, boat rental, bait and tackle sales, souvenirs, and vending sales. Two operations provide restaurant style food service (Viking Lake and Springbrook Conservation Education Center) and two operations provide dock slip rental and other marina-type services (Big Creek and Storm Lake Marina).

There were two firewood sales contracts and two private vending machine contracts also providing services. The concession at Viking Lake was under the operation of a new concessionaire in 2011.

Recruitment of new private concession operations in other parks continues to be a struggle. In areas where there is interest by potential private operators, concession facilities are outdated or nonexistent and in other areas, the seasonal nature of the business provides a challenge to make a profit. The concession at Pikes Peak is the only state-operated concession.

Concession revenue was down slightly in 2011 (approximately 1.5%). Ten private concession operations and two private firewood vendors reported \$1,093,072.95 in gross receipts. Concession fees paid to the department totaled \$66,398.46 which is an average of 6% of gross receipts reported. In addition, there were six state park friends groups under contract to sell souvenirs, firewood, and other memorabilia. The net proceeds of the sales are required to go back to the parks in the form of park improvement projects. A breakdown of the 2011 concession revenue by park and type can be found in the report supplement.

INTERPRETATION

Although the number of interpretive positions has remained low, program numbers and attendance have continued to increase. This year there were six AmeriCorps interpreter positions, one full-time interpreter shared between the state parks bureau and Webster County Conservation Board and one full time interpreter position funded by the management company at Honey Creek Resort State Park. One

challenge this year for interpretation involved the Missouri River flooding. As interpreters were hired through the AmeriCorps program, they were called away from their interpretive duties to assist with the flooding situation in western Iowa.



A total of 1,068 interpretive programs were given in 2011. This is an increase of 38% from 2010. Total attendance figures for those programs was 46,233.

The EB Lyons Interpretive Center at Mines of Spain State Recreation Area was open for its first full year in 2011 after undergoing a major renovation. The interpretive center was nearly doubled in sized to 13,700 square feet. The new addition houses new office space, a multifunction room, and storage on the upper level. The lower level consists of a conference room/library, natural resource science lab/classroom, storage, and new restrooms. The former building area was remodeled and now houses new exhibits that highlight the parks natural resources of prairies, forests, and water, and cultural history of the Meskwaki, Julien Dubuque, and lead mining. There is also a bird observation to enjoy watching birds in a comfortable setting. The friends of Mines of Spain were instrumental in raising funds for the



In 2011, 154 programs were given at the newly renovated EB Lyons Interpretive Center with 32,000 in attendance.

center. The group raised over \$1.8 million for the new facility and exhibits.

Implementation of interpretive plans at Bellevue State Park and Honey Creek Resort continues. A new interpretive plan for Backbone State Park was completed in 2011. The need has been identified for kiosks that will provide year-round self guided interpretation and overall park orientation. The plan is to have these types of kiosks in all state parks and recreation areas. Interpretive kiosks will be designed, fabricated and installed at Bellevue, Honey Creek Resort, Maquoketa Caves, and Pikes Peak in 2012. A grant from the Office of Energy Independence was used for interpretive panels at Honey Creek Resort which focus on green energy at the resort.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In 2011, the invasive species crew concentrated their efforts at Lake Macbride State Park and Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area. Approximately 20 acres were cleared of honeysuckle and autumn olive and planted to native prairie. Fifty acres at Pleasant Creek have been treated for a frost seeding of native grasses.

Progress made is, in large part, due to the equipment that was purchased a few years ago. The crew continues to use two skid steers with tree shearers and two large skid steers with Feecon forestry mowers. Two more tree shearers have been purchased to be used in north central Iowa and one tree shearer was donated to be used in southwest Iowa.



Prairie burn at Brushy Creek State Recreation Area.

Statewide 1,630 acres of prairie were burned; 542 acres of prairie planted, 166 acres of timber stand improvement work or savanna restoration work started; and 322 acres of invasive species work done. Invasive species work includes pulling, cutting and/or treating garlic mustard, oriental bittersweet, honeysuckle, and autumn olive.

DEER MANAGEMENT HUNTS IN PARKS

Each year, the Natural Resource Commission approves deer population management hunts in state parks. In 2011, 231 hunts in 21 state parks/satellites were scheduled. The hunts at Lake Manawa and Lake Darling were cancelled. Of the 1,150 antlerless licenses available for all the hunts combined, 793 licenses were sold. Deer harvested in 2011 totaled 386 with the following breakdown: 302 does, 82 button bucks, 1 antlered buck, 1 shed buck. A detailed report of the 2011 deer management season can be found in the report supplement.

BEACH MONITORING



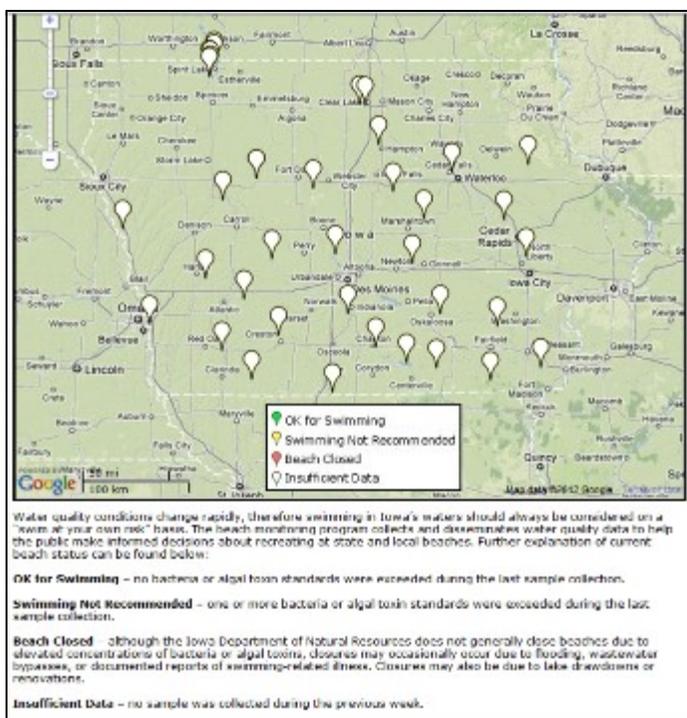
The Iowa DNR Beach Monitoring Program collects data on indicator bacteria (specifically *E. coli*) at beaches throughout the state with the goal of safeguarding the health of those seeking to recreate in Iowa's lakes.

Weekly samples were collected at 35 state-owned beaches from the week leading up to Memorial Day through Labor Day in 2011. The most recent sample results, along with the swimming status at each beach, were updated on the Iowa DNR website and Beach Monitoring Hotline while advisory signs were posted at beaches exceeding recreational standards for indicator bacteria. During the program's twelve year existence, beachgoers have come to rely on this information to make informed decisions about when and where to recreate when it comes to Iowa's beaches.

As in years past, advisory policy at Iowa's state park beaches was based on two standards: a one-time sample maximum and a geometric mean. The one-time sample maximum standard was used at beaches

beaches that have experienced persistent problems with bacteria in recent years. These beaches are classified as “vulnerable” or “transitional” beaches. Whenever a sample from any of these beaches had an *E. coli* result exceeding 235 organisms per 100 ml of water, a “Water Quality Advisory” sign was posted. The geometric mean standard, which is based on five consecutive samples collected within a 30-day period, was used to determine when beaches were experiencing chronically elevated levels of *E. coli*. Bacteria concentrations in the environment, and therefore results from sampling, often vary by orders of magnitude from week to week; the geometric mean calculation provides an unbiased average across a number of samples.

“Water Quality Advisory” signs were posted at any beach that exceeded Iowa’s geometric mean standard of 126 organisms per 100 ml of water. During the 2011 monitoring season, advisories were posted at beaches for exceeding the one-time sample maximum standard approximately 8% of the time; beaches exceeded the geometric mean standard approximately 22% of the time. A chart showing the last 12 years of beach monitoring testing can be found in the report supplement.



The Iowa Department of Natural Resources recently partnered with the Iowa Department of Public Health to implement a cyanotoxin monitoring and health surveillance program for surface waters in

Iowa. Cyanotoxins are harmful substances produced by cyanobacteria (a.k.a. blue-green algae) that can cause adverse health effects in humans and animals. This program aims to determine the relative health risk from contact with water bodies containing commonly occurring genera of blue-green algae and their associated toxins.

The Iowa DNR monitors state beaches for microcystins, the most commonly occurring and widespread of the cyanotoxins. The World Health Organization (WHO) has established guidelines for issuing health alerts for recreational waters based on this group of toxins. Concentrations of 20 micrograms per liter of water ($\mu\text{g/L}$) total microcystins indicate a moderate risk of cyanotoxin-associated illness. This is a concentration twenty times greater than the WHO drinking water standard of 1 $\mu\text{g/L}$. The presence of algal scum elevates the risk of exposure to concentrations exceeding this threshold.

In the event that a sample exceeds the action threshold of 20 $\mu\text{g/L}$ total microcystins, an advisory sign is posted warning beachgoers that an increased potential for exposure to cyanotoxins exists. Microcystins advisories are then updated on the Iowa DNR website and Beach Monitoring Hotline. Also, the Iowa Department of Public Health issues a health alert for the area in which the toxic bloom is located. Cyanotoxins break down naturally over time and the water is considered safe for recreation once a subsequent sample has been analyzed that confirms toxin levels are below the action threshold.

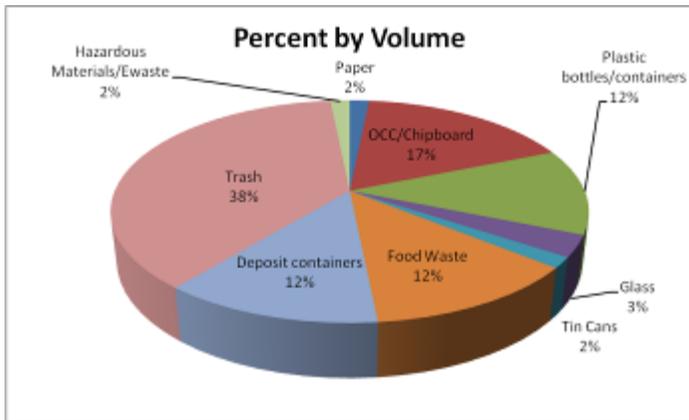
Eight cyanotoxin advisories were posted between Memorial Day and Labor Day in 2011; three at Lake of Three Fires beach, two at Black Hawk Lake beach, two at Lake Keomah beach, and one at Marble beach on Big Spirit Lake. One additional advisory was posted at Big Creek beach outside of the routine monitoring season.

RECYCLING PROGRAMS



With the exception of Honey Creek Resort, Iowa’s state parks currently do not provide park visitors and guests a coordinated opportunity to recycle materials while visiting and camping. Conserving natural resources through recycling is a mission of the Department.

A waste sort pilot project was initiated at George Wyth State Park over Labor Day weekend to identify what types of waste campers “threw away” in the campground dumpsters. The waste was sorted by various recyclable and non-recyclable categories.



In addition to the George Wyth project, a request for proposal was issued to hire a consultant to investigate the practical and economic feasibility of implementing a coordinated recycling opportunity in campground areas of selected state parks. The parks which will participate in the project include Backbone, Clear Lake, George Wyth, Gull Point, Lake Anita, Lake Manawa, Ledges, and Rock Creek. A recommendations report regarding the feasibility of implementing recycling in identified state parks will come out in August 2012.

TRAILS CREW

The 2011 trail crew kept very busy completing desperately needed trail maintenance in parks, storm damage clean up, and new trail construction.



Crew sizes varied depending upon the work load. Up to 22 staff was working on some of the projects. Temporary trail crew staff is employed through AmeriCorps program.

Work breakdown by park for 2011 is as follows:

Trail Maintenance

Pine Lake – 4 weeks
 Lake of Three Fires – 9 weeks
 Ledges – 4 weeks
 Brushy Creek – 6 weeks
 George Wyth – 1 week
 Geode – 3 weeks
 Elk Rock – 4 weeks
 Stone – 3 weeks



Storm Clean Up

Pine Lake – 4 weeks
 Union Grove – 1 week

New Trails

Honey Creek Resort – 2 weeks



On Christmas Day 2011, fire broke out in the trail shop located at Big Creek State Park. The building was just five years old and is considered a total loss. Most of the trail program’s equipment and machinery were lost in the fire. Fortunately, the entire summer fleet of DNR vehicles which were located next to the building were spared.

VOLUNTEERS/FRIENDS GROUPS

Each year, volunteers generously provide thousands of hours of their time, talents and interests to improve Iowa’s state parks. Last year was one of the

all time greatest hardships in Iowa state parks. Parks were staffed at the extreme minimum and park maintenance had been scaled back to a barely viable level. The communities that support and love these parks stepped up in droves to assist park staff with keeping the parks functional for all visitors.

In 2011, 1,905 volunteers provided 39,950 hours of volunteer work in state parks. Work included serving as campground hosts, mowing, trash pick-up, maintenance, tree trimming, painting, and working in interpretive centers. The estimated national average hourly wage for a volunteer is \$21.36/hour. That values our volunteer work at an amazing \$853,332. A breakdown of volunteer hours by park can be found in the report supplement.



Iowa state parks now have 34 organized friends groups, with the newest one formed in 2011— Friends of Volga River. These friends groups are usually formed to promote and enhance a particular state park or recreation area. A few of the groups promote outdoor recreation of an area such High Lakes Outdoor Alliance. Many of the volunteers in our parks are also members of these friends groups. A couple of highlights from 2011 include:

Friends of Beed’s Lake – The group began the season in May with a clean-up project at the park. Thirty volunteers helped paint docks, sign posts and trim, pick up trash and tree limbs, and trim trees and shrubs. In June they hosted a Carp Fishing Tourney and handed out \$400 in prize money.

In August, the group hosted their first Beed’s Lake Blast and their fourth Restoration Run. Activities

included a pasta feed, 5K, 10K 1/2M races, pancake breakfast, kids fishing tourney, golf chipping contest, kayak/canoe tours, music, and fireworks.

The group is also working on a Watershed Management Plan and has posted signs throughout the watershed to educate the public about the size of the watershed. Lastly, the group started construction of a new camper registration station.

Friends of Mini-Wakan State Park – The group completed fundraising of nearly \$500,000 to restore the existing historical shelter at the park. The project includes enclosing the shelter to make it a lodge, construction of restrooms and a concrete tent pad. The project was done in conjunction with the Spirit Lake Protective Association, community input, and help from the DNR and State Historical Society.

In addition, the group has also created a charitable organization to oversee an endowment fund for major repairs and replacement for the lodges at Mini-Wakan and Gull Point state parks. Funds are invested with the community Foundation of Greater Des Moines which is affiliated with the Okoboji Foundation.



The historic Mini-Wakan shelter undergoing renovation.

IOWA PARKS FOUNDATION



The Iowa Parks Foundation (IPF) was established in 2008 as a private/public partnership designed to reconnect Iowans to our parks and places of natural

beauty, celebrate the history and legacy of the state park system, and transform Iowa's most significant parks in preparation for the centennial celebration of Iowa's first state park in 2020. IPF has been working the past three years to build a constituency of support and awareness to advance its mission and goals.

In 2011, IPF contracted with ETC Institute to develop marketing research to measure Iowans use, attitudes toward, and goal for Iowa State parks, the results of which will be completed in February 2012. Information from the research project will allow IPF to build consensus regarding action strategies based on identified state park and citizen needs, unmet needs, and priorities.



IPF has also selected two state park projects work on. In 2000, Pine Lake State Park suffered enormous tree loss as a result of sustained straight line winds. Over 400 dead or dying trees have been removed from the park. A reforestation plan has been completed. Individual fundraising appeals in Hardin County for the project occurred in October 2011 and a local fundraising committee is in place. IPF is serving as the fiscal agent for the project using private investments.

The other project selected was the campground relocation project at Lake Manawa State Park. Moving the campground to the north end of the park would allow the park to close the south side of the park to traffic when the park closes at 10:30 p.m. The project is now on hold after the park experienced high-water this past summer. Planners will re-examine the proposed location of the new campground to ensure water will not be a problem.

LEGISLATION/RULE CHANGES

There was one piece of legislation passed in 2011 that had a dramatic impact for Iowa State Parks. The general appropriations included a requirement that the equivalent of 50 full-time employees be spent on seasonal staff to work in the parks. Some additional funds were provided to meet this require-

ment. After review and changes to various budget items such as equipment and facility maintenance, the state parks bureau was able fund the required 50 FTE positions immediate hired additional seasonal workers.

Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) Chapter 14 "Concessions" was updated in 2011. These rules govern how concession operations are recruited and put under contract with private operators. A major change to the advertising or notice procedure was to decrease the minimum amount of time between the date of public of advertisements and the deadline for submission of proposals. The bidding process rules were changed to create more opportunities for officially recognized friends groups to provide concession services, New procedures were establish to contract for firewood sales or placement of vending machines (single service contracts), and the evaluation criteria was updated.

The conservation and recreation division also took on major rule changes for special events. All special event applications are now submitted online, reviewed and approved online through the centralized special event system. Some bureaus had existing rules that needed to be updated to address the online system, and there were also new policies which needed to be addressed in rule for the online system. Some of the issues included defining when a person needed to get a permit, identifying special permit conditions, establishing application procedures, establishing insurance requirements , fees, and exceptions. The bureaus worked together to consolidate all special event rules into one chapter.

For state parks and recreation areas, the special event rules listed in IAC Chapter 61 "State Parks and Recreation Areas" and Chapter 65, "Fireworks Displays --State Parks and Recreation Areas" were rescinded and incorporated into IAC Chapter 44 "Special Events and Fireworks Displays."

SPECIAL EVENTS

Each year, state parks and recreation areas host numerous special events, many of which are annual. In 2011 the 35th annual Fort Atkinson Rendezvous was held. The City of Fort Atkinson does most of the set up, operation and tear down of

this popular event. A number of triathlons take place each summer such as the Cornman Triathlon at Union Grove State Park. “Christmas in July” has become a fun event in campgrounds at Ledges and Backbone and continues to expand to other parks.

Friends groups continue to host popular festivals such as Heritage Days at Wildcat Den State Park. In 2011, the friends groups for Wilson Island State and Lake Anita, co-hosted a Dutch-oven cook-off which was quite popular.

There are equestrian events such as the Iowa Trail Riders Association Competitive Ride which takes place at Brushy Creek. Fall events such as haunted Halloween hikes draw the local community out to Lake of Three Fires and Lake Anita. Winter events include the University of Okoboji Winter Games in Dickinson County (Gull Point) and The Jack at Clear Lake (McIntosh Woods) which is a snowmobile event. It was the second year that park staff and law enforcement bureau staff worked jointly at these extremely popular events. Combined, both bureaus had 9,000 contacts and 63 citations. Lastly, Winterfest Ice Fishing Derby is held each year at Lake Manawa. Up to 1,000 anglers try their luck fishing and winning prizes.

The Lewis & Clark Festival which is held each June to celebrate the Lewis & Clark expedition, was cancelled in 2011 when the park was closed due to the threat of flooding in the park.

In 2011, a very special event was held at Lake Macbride State Park. The event held on August 3, 2011 focused on being active and aware of healthy choices, as the park celebrated a \$10,000 grant from Coca Cola to be used for fitness and activity improvements. In addition to the cash award, Lake Macbride was also put in contention for top honors in Coca Cola’s 2011 *America Is Your Park* award with the grand prize being \$100,000. This was an online voting contest that ran through September 2011.

Governor Terry Branstad, local officials, Coca Cola representatives, and park officials were on hand to receive the check which was delivered by members of the Solon cross country team. Nearly 100 members of the public including two busloads of youth from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Cedar Rapids

attended the check ceremony and participated in a number of events.



Solon cross country team presents check to Governor Branstad and DNR Director Roger Lande.

The Macbride Raptor Center gave a presentation on local birds of prey (with live birds) explaining their role in nature. Park officials were on hand to highlight “fitness features” of the park, such as the wooded trails and the five mile Solon-to-Lake Macbride trails. Spokespersons from the Iowa Department of Health emphasized how healthy snacks fit into an active, outdoor lifestyle. There were also several contests; ranging from tent pitching races to grapefruit shot put for people to enjoy.



Even though Lake Macbride did not win the grand prize for *America is Your Park* contest, it was a very positive recognition and event for the park.

HEALTH INITIATIVE

Since 2008, the state parks bureau has been working with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

to create awareness of the healthy benefits of being outdoors.

In 2011, the state parks bureau partnered with IDPH to implement a vending machine policy in state parks. IDPH had teamed with the Iowa State University Extension to develop a Nutrition Environment Measures Survey (NEMS) that evaluates the nutritional value of vending machine foods and beverages (NEMS-V). A red, green or yellow rating was developed to help Iowans take charge of their food choices and make informed decisions. All vending machine contracts for state parks will require at least 30% of the food or beverage choices meet NEMS-V yellow or green criteria.

The Conservation and Recreation Division is also included in the IDPH “Healthy Iowans--A Five-year Health Improvement Plan.”



Two goals for the Conservation and Recreation Division of the Department are centered on Physical Activity for Healthy Living:

Goal 1 – Increase the rankings of participation in physical outdoor recreation activities listed in Iowa’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Goal 2 – Increase awareness among Iowans about the link between outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles, based on benchmarks established in the 2011 SCORP survey.

GULL POINT 4TH OF JULY PARTNERSHIP

The bureau’s largest law enforcement project takes place over the Fourth of July at Gull Point State Park in Dickinson County. State park beaches in Dickinson County are the only beaches in the great lakes area which allow beer and wine on the property. As a result, the beach at Gull Point can be quite large with a high concentration of alcohol consumption. As a result, the bureau now works with the local Iowa State Patrol to manage the crowd, provide public safety and help decrease the number of alcohol related issues. This was the

second year for the partnership project. In 2011, over 400 citations and numerous arrests were made during the three day project. This highly proactive partnership has resulted in no serious incidents at the beach and will continue as long as large crowds continue to occupy the beach at Gull Point.

IOWA STATE FAIR

The 2011 state fair theme was a spin-off from Coca’s Cola’s *America is Your Park* contest and the Iowa Straw Poll which was taking place. Fair goers had the opportunity to “vote” for their favorite Iowa State Park or Recreation Area. The exhibit was extremely popular with the public. Quantifying the number of state parks and recreation areas in Iowa generated great conversations.



The “unscientific” poll results had Ledges State Park winning the title of “Iowa’s Favorite State Park”. Runner-up honors went to Backbone State Park. Rounding out the top five were: Clear Lake, Lake Ahquabi and Big Creek state parks.

DONATIONS

Forty-nine donations were presented to the Natural Resource Commission in 2011 totaling \$45,961.03. Donations include funding for playground equipment, labor for park projects, maintenance items such as rock, paint, lumber, equipment purchases, and general park improvement projects. Parks receiving donations in 2011 include:

Brushy Creek -- \$7,060.10
 Green Valley -- \$5,554.50
 Lacey-Keosauqua -- \$447.50
 Lake Darling -- \$1,999.00
 Lake Macbride -- \$11,199.19
 Ledges -- \$46.00
 McIntosh Woods -- \$4,450.00
 Mines of Spain -- \$2,685.86
 Pine Lake -- \$3,299.95
 Pleasant Creek -- \$6,000.00
 Red Haw -- \$721.28
 Stephens Forest Campground -- \$827.20
 Walnut Woods -- \$1,620.45
 Wapsipinicon -- \$50.00

STATE PARK OPERATIONS BUDGET*

The operations budget covers critical expenses necessary to run the Iowa state parks system. Expenses include permanent and seasonal staff salaries, state vehicles (including depreciation, maintenance, fuel), facility maintenance supplies, equipment purchases and maintenance, utilities (water, sewer, electricity, propane), communications (phones, cell phones, internet), outside/professional services/rentals (garbage pickup, etc.), natural resource management supplies/equipment, other supplies, and administrative expenses (computers, publications, postage, accounting, customer service, etc.). As the cost of utilities, state vehicle operations (fuel), and communications increase, less money is available for seasonal staff, equipment replacement and maintenance, and building and grounds maintenance.

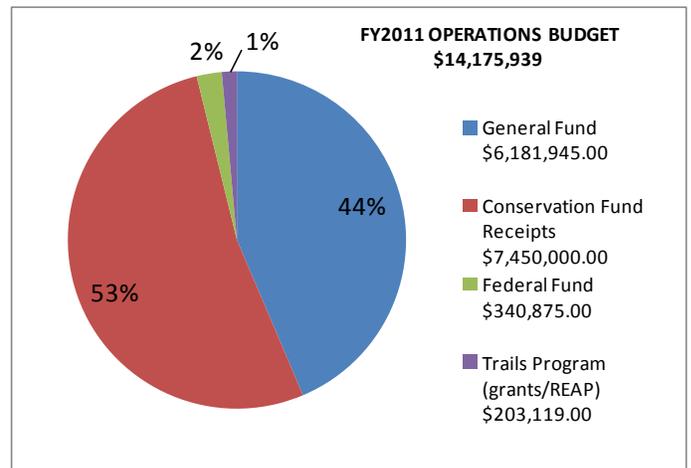
Decreasing the budgets for equipment maintenance, facility/grounds maintenance and equipment purchases is a short term solution to address budget cuts and increasing costs such as utilities, but it is not self-sustaining. The FY11 equipment purchase budget was \$101,000. That is a little over \$2,000 per staffed park (48 parks). Equipment maintenance which includes fuel, equipment repairs, oil, filters, tires, etc. was around \$400,000 which is only \$8,000 per park. Factor in the 22 satellites and it goes down to \$5,700 per area. The facility and grounds maintenance budget was about \$400,000 dollars as well, which again leaves only \$5,700 per area to take care of the state park system.

Funding for the operations budget comes from the following sources:

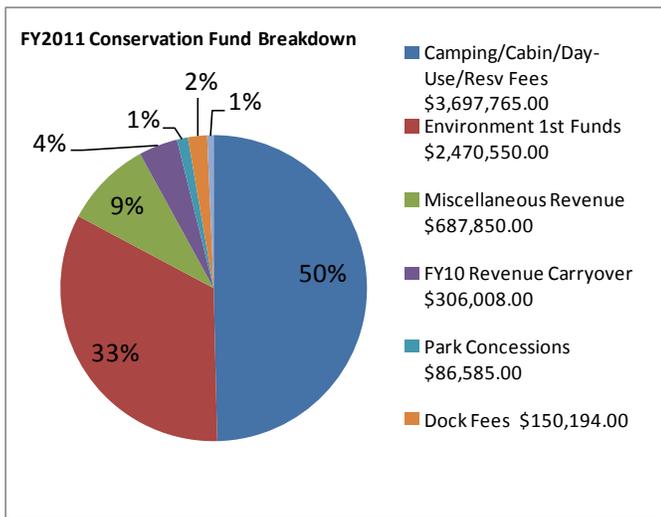
- General Fund — appropriated each year by the legislature
- Conservation Fund Receipts — fees/revenue generated in the parks, sand/gravel royalties, barge fleeting revenue, gaming revenue
- Federal Funds — usually in the form of grants for the trails crew
- Cedar Rock Trust — provides some funding for operations at Cedar Rock only
- Other — grants and some resources out of REAP land management for operation of the trails program

*This does not include Honey Creek Resort

In 2011, the operations budget for state parks (excluding Honey Creek Resort) was \$14,175,939.



The conservation fund is the largest funding source for state park operations, followed closely by the general fund. Half of the conservation fund receipts comes from park users in the form of camping fees, cabin, day-use lodge and shelter fees, camping coupon book sales and reservation transaction fees. The next largest funding source for the conservation fund is a transfer of funds from the environment first fund. These gaming revenues are transferred to parks to bolster the operations budget. Miscellaneous revenues includes the nature store, land management leases, sand/gravel royalties, barge fleeting, taxes, sale of junk, donations and other miscellaneous revenue. Dock fees include dock management areas and dock rental in state parks.



REAP Land Management funds (\$356,352), are used for a myriad of emergency projects that afflict the large amount of aging infrastructure. Some examples include sewer lift station pumps, water pumps, waterline breaks, leaking roofs, electrical system repairs etc. Other funding sources include: DOT Park and Institutional Road Fund (P&I) which addresses major and minor park road repairs (\$1,353,666); Marine fuel tax (MFT) and coast guard (federal) funds which are utilized for boating facility improvements (\$206,544).

2011 Total Capital Park Improvements – \$7,888,265

There is a misperception by some of the public regarding what funds operations and maintenance of the state park system. Funds from the fish and wildlife trust fund (hunting and fishing license sales) do not fund state park operations. In addition, the operation of Honey Creek Resort is funded through the revenue generated at the resort. That includes lodge rental, meeting room/banquet hall use, water park fees/concessions, cottage rental, RV campground fees, the restaurant and the golf course.



Lake Ahquabi entrance portal before restoration.

CAPITALS PROGRAM BUDGET

An assessment of the replacement value of Iowa state park infrastructure was recently estimated at more than a half billion dollars. Ongoing maintenance, upgrade, renovation, and replacement of state park's aging infrastructure are critical components of providing quality outdoor visitor services and protecting the natural resources.



Lake Ahquabi entrance portal after restoration.

From 1996 to 2006 the focus of state park capital investments was on restoration of the unique historic stone and timber beach houses, lodges, shelters, cabins and portals. Since then the primary emphasis has been upgrading drinking water and sewage treatment systems and campground electricity.

In 2011 several funding sources were utilized to accomplish this important work which include expending the last monies from a 2008 State Park Health and Safety fund (Infrastructure fund - \$469,775); 2010 and 2011 IJOBS funds (\$3,583,541); and REAP Open Spaces (\$1,918,414).

Natural disasters such as baseball-sized hail, heavy rains and flooding, tornadoes, and straight-line winds, befall state parks like the rest of the state. If events are officially declared a disaster, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds may be available for a 75 – 90% match for repairs. That is often matched with funds from the Executive Council of the Governor's office (\$515,242). If not a FEMA disaster, the Executive Council may be the sole source of repair or replacement funds (Hardin Co hail damage - \$157,655). There was a large amount of damage incurred in state parks due to the 2008 flood that was not covered by FEMA. This was also too large to be funded through the

Executive Council, so a Supplemental Appropriation was allocated from the Legislature (\$738,237). These expenditures were complicated and delayed by multiple years of repeated flood damage.

Total Weather-related Expenditures—\$1,411,134



Installation of a pre-fabricated concrete shower building.

There are also funds outside of the “Parks Annual Capital Budget” that may vary based on fluctuating priorities and program intentions. These would include: Iowa Values Fund (\$310,240), Lake Restoration funds; and 319 (federal) funds. The latter two address watershed improvements and in-lake restorations around the state and sometimes include work accomplished in state parks (\$2,694,429).

Total “Outside” Funding - \$3,004,669



New modern family cabin at Union Grove State Park. An anonymous donor contributed \$100,000 to the project.

The power of partnerships has proven to be great in accomplishing projects of varying sizes. All levels of government and private organizations benefit

from working together and leveraging dollars to make things happen for the betterment of state parks and visitor experiences.

Total Partnership Dollars Leveraged — \$474,018

A breakdown of projects by park and funding source can be found in the report supplement.



Pre-fabricated concrete pit toilet.

IOWA STATE PARKS DESIGN GUIDE

Many of Iowa’s finest park buildings were built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The face of state parks was forever changed by these two federal work programs during the Depression. More than 6,000 men built 1,000+ structures in 43 Iowa state parks.

The buildings were constructed of native materials available locally, logs cut from the forests, and stone quarried in the parks or nearby. The distinctive stone and timber beach buildings, lodges, shelters, trail bridges and entry portals built during this period have become associated with the identity of Iowa state parks. Noting this fact, it was recognized that there was a need to develop a design guide to provide a framework for future park architecture that will enhance the Iowa state park experience and identity.

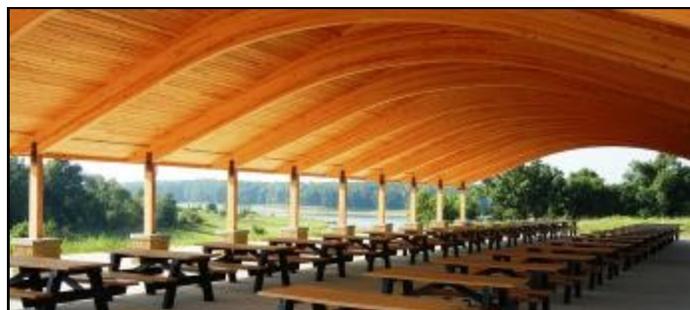
It was more than a year in the making and was guided by a large team comprised of: DNR staff from parks, engineering & architecture; conservation partners such as the Iowa Heritage Foundation, Keep Iowa Beautiful, Iowa Park Foundation; and a design and engineering consultant. A visual preference survey was conducted with all park staff, members of the public and state park friends groups.

HONEY CREEK RESORT

In 2011, Honey Creek Resort State Park continued to expand its amenities, and increased its visits among new and returning guests and meeting groups.

Among its new amenities, Honey Creek Resort opened an Activities Building in spring 2011, originally designed by Iowa State University students for a national sustainable design competition. The building offsets all its energy use and features solar energy, recycled products and passive solar design, among other eco-friendly technologies. Additionally, a new 80-foot wind turbine provides electricity to basement classroom space. The building will serve as a center for naturalist programming and educational activities.

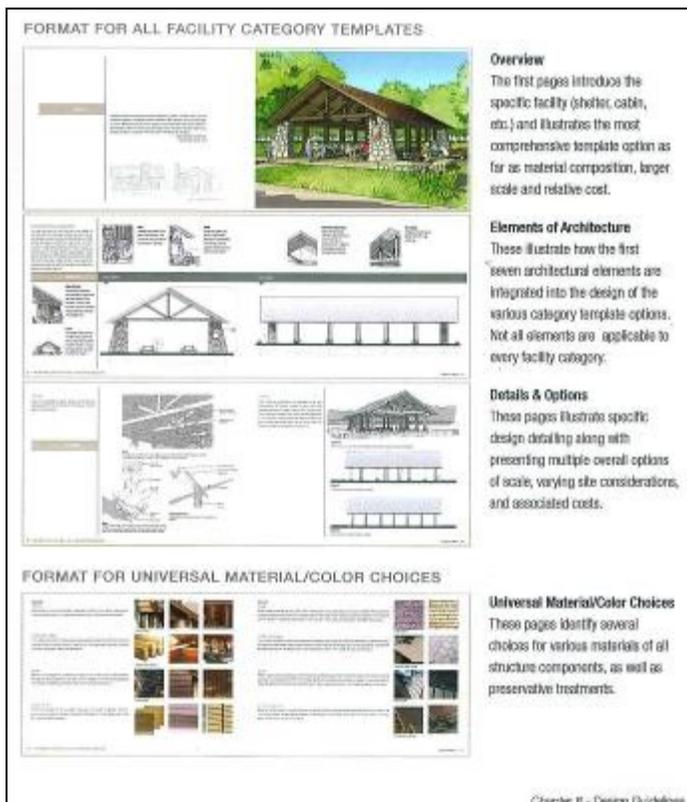
Solar thermal panels have been installed on the main lodge and photovoltaic cells installed on the roofs of five cottages. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2012 and will provide hot water in guest rooms as well as feed into Buccaneer Bay's Lazy River.



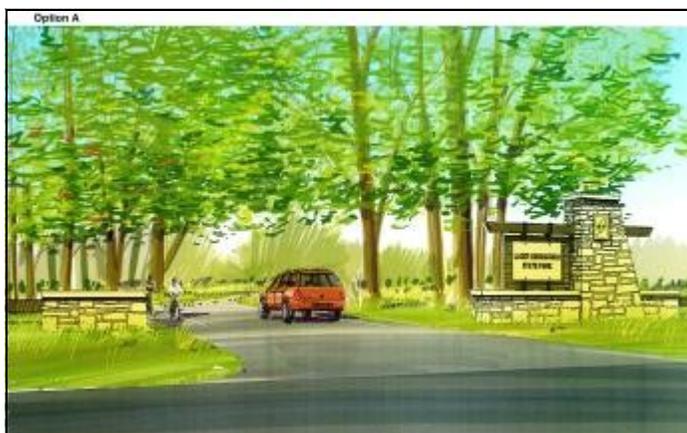
The new outdoor pavilion at Honey Creek Resort.

Several new facilities at Honey Creek Resort include completion of a boat ramp, an outdoor pavilion/shelter that can hold 400 people, and a children's playground made of natural and environmentally friendly materials. Additionally, the Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are partnering to improve the shoreline around the resort through a riprap project to be completed in 2012. The riprap will prevent shoreline erosion and improve fishing opportunities.

Many organizations made Honey Creek Resort their meeting location in 2011. The Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers (AGLOW) spent a week in September touring the local area and writing articles



Iowa State Park Design Guide – a thoughtful long-term vision for state park architecture.



for outdoor magazines. A religious group, The Church of God, hosted Honey Creek's single largest group to date with 360 attendees during the week.

Overall, Honey Creek Resort hosted more than 100,000 guests equaling 23,268 room nights in 2011, including 28 weddings, 7,500 participants in on-site naturalist programs, and 11,152 rounds of golf at The Preserve 18-hole golf course.

IOWA STATE PARKS BY THE NUMBERS....

48 -- "staffed" state parks and recreation areas

22 -- "satellite" state parks/recreation areas

Total Acreage: 55,871

71 campgrounds (5,064 campsites)

86 cabins (deluxe, modern family, camping)

2 yurts

26 day-use lodges

147 picnic shelters

247 picnic areas

455 miles of hiking trails

135 miles of equestrian trails (excludes state forests)

190 miles of mountain bike trails

57 miles of paved bicycle trails

360 miles of cross country ski trails

243 miles of snowmobile trails

40 beaches

124 boat ramps

178 fishing jetties/piers

5 museums/interpretive centers



Brushy Creek State Recreation Area



Pikes Peak State Park

752 paved/gravel parking lots

80 shower/restroom buildings

93 modern restroom buildings

280 pit toilets

65 miles of underground electric lines

32 sewage lagoons

64 septic fields

91 miles of sewer lines

53 drinking water wells

150 miles of water lines

1 state park resort

1 conservation education center

1 sign shop

22 parks managed by other governmental entities

Total Acreage: 3,800

Equal Opportunity

Federal and state regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability. State law also prohibits discrimination on the basis of creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, pregnancy or public accommodation. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or for more information, write: Director, DNR, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319-0034 or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Washington, D.C. 20240

