

2010 REAP Congress

January 9, 2010

**Report to: Governor Culver
Iowa Legislature
Natural Resources Commission**



Inquiries pertaining to this report may be directed to:

Ross Harrison, REAP Coordinator
Iowa DNR
502 E. 9th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

ross.harrison@dnr.iowa.gov
Office: 515-281-5973
Fax: 515-281-6794

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TO: Governor Chet Culver
Michael Marshall, Secretary of the Senate
Mark Brandsgard, Chief Clerk of the House
Liz Garst, Chair of the Natural Resources Commission

As required by Section 455A.17, Code of Iowa, I present you with the report of the 2010 Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Congress which was conducted January 9 in the chambers of the House of Representatives.

Sixty-three of the eighty-five delegates to the REAP Congress attended – during the coldest day of the year and just after a statewide blizzard. Those delegates were elected by 650 Iowans in the fall during the 17 regional assemblies conducted throughout the state.

These and many additional Iowans strongly believe that REAP can be one of the state's most important tools to stimulate economic development and improve their quality of life. The Congress took a number of actions in this regard.

Chief among these actions are to fully fund REAP, put more money into conservation education but retain the formula for distribution of the rest of the REAP funds. The delegates were also highly supportive of the Iowa Water and Land Legacy constitutional amendment that will be on the ballot this fall.

REAP is recognized as Iowa's primary local funding program for natural and cultural resources. The massive amount of public participation, culminating in actions by the Congress, makes it truly a grassroots led program. The delegates thank you for the support you have given, and urge you to action for improving REAP in the future.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Leopold
Director

2010 REAP Congress

January 9, 2010

8:00 am – 2:13 pm

House of Representatives Chambers

Roll Call

63 of 85 delegates were present on the coldest day of the year, so far, and following a statewide blizzard just two days before that left many roads impassable. Several of the delegates (included in the 63) arrived after the initial roll call was taken at 8:10 a.m.

Guest Remarks

Ken Herring, DNR Conservation and Recreation Division Administrator, addressed the Congress to help prepare them for their deliberations, suggesting not to be concerned about changing anything or keeping everything the same; it is the delegates' meeting to do as they see fit.

Lt. Gov. Patty Judge addressed the Congress, reminding delegates that REAP is one of the Culver-Judge Administration's favorite programs due to its involvement of Iowans and the benefits stemming from REAP projects. She also unveiled two new natural resource license plates that will be available for sale in the spring: one featuring a brook trout, the other a buck whitetail.

Recommendations/Updates from State Departments and Other REAP Stakeholders

- Ross Harrison, DNR REAP Coordinator, presented DNR and REAP updates including:
 - The Culver-Judge Administration had asked for and received from the legislature the highest appropriations levels in history of REAP: \$15.5 million in FY 08, and \$18 million in both FY 09 and FY 10.
 - Additional historical interest membership in county committees has been added to the REAP Act.
 - The REAP Act was also amended to allow designees of mayors/council members, and chairs of school boards, county conservation boards, and soil and water conservation districts to be REAP county committee members.
 - The Ducks Unlimited license plate has been approved by DOT and more than the 500 minimum sold in the first year, with 25% of revenues retained in an equal split between REAP and DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program.
 - Explanation of the young-adult group of eight who are observing Congress in the morning, then caucusing after lunch under direction of Stacey

Olson, DNR REAP assistant coordinator, to provide recommendation for improving young-adult involvement in REAP.

- Discussion of public education about REAP, pointing out that county committees, with the aid of DNR and other REAP stakeholders, are in best position to reach Iowans with the accomplishments of REAP in their local communities. However, too few county committees are sufficiently motivated to do any more than barest legal requirements. The challenge for REAP's long-term success is to motivate, equip, and otherwise aid those committees.

- Vern Fish and Kathy McKee, both on the REAP Conservation Education Program (CEP) board addressed Congress, recommending a resolution to increase the CEP allotment from the historic \$350,000 to \$500,000 per year. This issue was one of the top issues in 15 of the 17 assemblies, and the history of demand far exceeding funding was pointed out. Doing this would not open the rest of the REAP formula to debate.
- Don Brazelton presented on the history, status of the FY09 budget and predictions of the 2010 Legislative Session as it pertains to REAP. February 16th has been scheduled as REAP Day at the Capitol.
- Mark Ackelson presented on Iowa's Water and Land Legacy Constitutional Amendment that will appear on the ballot for Iowa voters in November.

Election of Congress Chair

Dean Mueller, director of Worth County Conservation Board. Elected unanimously.

2009 Assembly Report

650 attended in 2009 vs. 700 in 2007; 35 legislators attended in 2009 vs. 37 in 2007.

Rainy weather occurred at about ½ of the 2009 Assemblies early in the schedule; harvest activity became heavy in dryer period near end of schedule.

REAP Knowledge of Assembly Participants*

	2009	2007
None	7%	8%
Limited	32	49
Fairly Good	43	43
Extensive	18	8

*27% raised hands at Assemblies saying this was their 1st time to attend

Discussion: Assembly audiences were a little more informed about REAP in 2009 with 61% saying they were fairly or extensively knowledgeable vs. 51% in 2007. 39% in 2009 said they had no or little knowledge vs. 57% in 2007

How participants heard of opportunity to attend Assembly

Letter from DNR	26%
REAP web site	6
News media	6

Conservation organization email	37
Word of mouth	15
Other	10

Discussion: Three weeks in advance of each Assembly, invitation letters were sent to each of the regions' following officials: 933 city clerks, 379 county board of supervisors members, 150 legislators, 122 Iowa Park and Recreation members, 20 Iowa Councils of Government, 197 REAP delegates/alternates from 2007 and the 2009 county REAP chairs. Unlike the prior two Assemblies, invitations were not sent to approx. 18,000 Pheasants Forever members.

Three weeks in advance of each Assembly, news releases were emailed and each followed with a phone call to all newspapers in each region.

Prior to the Assemblies beginning, the schedule for all meetings was provided to the REAP Alliance, League of Cities, Iowa State Association of Counties, County Conservation Boards, and many other organizations.

Prior to the Assemblies beginning and at mid-term, the schedule for all meetings was provided to the 1,133 REAP members of the list serve compiled in previous 2 years. The REAP Alliance and several of its member organizations issued widespread emails to individual members, alerting them to attend Assemblies throughout the schedule.

The Dept. of Agriculture and Land Stewardship invited all SWCD commissioners to the Assemblies.

Assembly Recommendations Spanning All of REAP

The numbers that follow the boldfaced headings show the actual number of assemblies that listed this idea; where no number occurs, the idea came up at just one assembly. Indented listings are related to the larger boldfaced category and also show the number of assemblies that these 'subheadings' were voiced, if brought up more than once.

Full funding – 17

- Increase REAP funding beyond \$20 million – 3
- Create state emergency fund to aid acquisitions with tight time frames

More public education on REAP – 15

- Promote REAP license plates more – 5
 - Make plate selection more broad
 - Involve car dealerships
 - Require REAP plates on RVs
 - Make plates available for government vehicles
 - Create wood duck, pileated wood pecker plates
- Encourage more use of REAP signs - 5
- Improve REAP website – 3
- Educate legislators – 3
- Keep county supervisors informed

- Educate public on value of public lands, REAP's carbon storage
- Increase funding for Conservation Education Program – 15**
 - Partner with Dept. of Human Services for day care conservation education
 - Encourage invasive species education
 - Collaborate with other agencies
 - Reach farmers on conservation practices
- Don't change formula -13**
 - Discuss possible changes
- More money for or more emphasis on land acquisition -11**
- Support sustainable funding ballot initiative -10**
- More support for REAP County Committees -9**
 - Require five-year plans to qualify for grants
- Get more youth involved -7**
- More emphasis on water quality -5**
- More funding for trails – 5**
- Increase funding for roadside vegetation - 4**
- More funding for county conservation boards – 4**
 - Better balance in per capita allocations for large vs. small county conservation boards
- Increase funding for historic resources - 3**
- More funding for soil and water enhancement practices – 2**
- Evaluate/audit past projects**
- Make REAP Congress more effective, possible as advisory council to Legislature**
- Require 'best practices' for all REAP projects**
- Emphasis on low-impact development**

Assembly Recommendations Directed to Agencies

Dept. of Natural Resources

- Investigate more lake development – 2
- Do not spend Open Spaces funding on maintenance; only on acquisition
- Fund natural areas inventory
- More money for state parks
- Help preserve and inventory privately owned prairies

Dept. of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

- Fund watershed planning, long-term land use, alternative farming, sink holes – 6
- Expand urban storm water activities – 3
- Update practices list for SWCDs, fund agri-forestry, new opportunities -3
- Expand forest, prairie and wildflower establishment opportunities - 2
- Establish priority soil and water projects – 2
- Aid in planning, technical design for conservation practices
- Mandatory stream management for landowners
- Exclude livestock from streams
- Change TSI from 10 to 20 years in maintenance agreement

Dept. of Cultural Affairs

- Higher priority to emerging historic preservation

Improve grant procedures

- Provide more grant writing assistance – 6
 - Help COGs help cities
- More funding for maintenance projects or make them score better – 4
- Require some cost-share for grants – 4
- Focus on big projects, regional - 3
- More rotation for grant scorers, term limits -2
- Allocate grant funds on regional basis – 2
- Priority to purchase of natural ‘green spaces’ within urban areas -2
- Balance acquisition and development for county conservation - 2
- Keep emphasis on acquisition for county conservation
- Allocate grant funding based on numbers of applications per category
- Do not allow grant scorers to apply
- Add additional category for city population size
- Better feedback for unsuccessful grants
- Do not fund same project two years in row
- Create accessibility for nonprofits for grants
- Simplify education grant application

Action Items by Congress

1. Motion: **Full funding for REAP.** Nels Christensen, moved. John Wills, second. Vote: Yes: 48, No:10. Motion passed.
 - Substitute Motion: **Ask Legislature for FY11 funding equal to FY10, then full funding in future years.** Roger White, moved. Jim Miksch, second. Vote: Yes: 15, No: 43. Motion failed.
 - Concerns voiced for and against full funding due to state’s economic problems.
2. Motion: **Increase funding for CEP from \$350,000 to \$500,000.** John Tapken, moved. Chuck Ungs, second.
 - Friendly Amendment: **Increase funding for CEP from \$350,000 to \$500,000, without changing the REAP formula.** Jim Pease, moved. Molly Ketchum, second. Vote: Yes: 41, No: 17. Motion passed.
3. Motion: **Increase DNR administration funding from 1% to 2% with the increase dedicated to public information about REAP.** Chris Ruhaak, moved. Michael Johnson, second. Vote: Yes: 0, No: 55. Motion failed
4. Motion: **Recommend that each county committee develop a plan within the next year for public awareness of REAP.** Roger White, moved. Molly Ketchum, second. Vote: Yes: 10, No: 48. Motion failed.

5. Motion: **Retain the current REAP formula (including \$500,000 for conservation education).** Eric Forquer, moved. Al Ourth, second. Vote: Yes: 59, No: 2. Motion passed.

- Amendment: **Establish a separate piece of the REAP pie designated for State Parks.** Steve Thompson, moved. Al Schafbuch, second. Vote: Yes: 2, No: 60. Motion failed.

6. Motion: **REAP Congress recommends a continued emphasis on the acquisition of public lands that are unique and ecologically significant.** Nels Christensen, moved. Chris Ruhaak second. Vote: Yes:58 , No:2. Motion passed.

7. Motion: **REAP Congress endorses Iowa Water and Land Legacy constitutional amendment.** Al Ourth, moved. Molly Ketchum, second. Vote: Yes:58, No: 4. Motion passed.

8. Motion: **REAP Congress recognizes the considerable work of Ross Harrison for the advancement of natural resources enhancement and protection and State of Iowa. Asks the Legislature to recognize Ross Harrison for his efforts in leading the REAP Program.** Nels Christensen, moved. Al Ourth, second. Vote: Yes: Unanimous.

9. Motion: **Endorse recommendations of the young adult caucus to increase participation of young adults in REAP.** Roger White, moved. Chuck Unga, second. Vote: Yes: unanimous.

Young Adult Iowans' Recommendations to REAP Congress

- 1) Use social networks to attract young adults, specifically Facebook and Twitter
Discussion: Would like assistance in exploring all social networks.
- 2) Make a database of high school and college environmental/conservation organizations to be used by REAP county committees and the DNR for publicizing meetings and events.
Discussion: Should also include classes and historical interests.
- 3) Hold local and regional networking events for young adults in order to meet other conservation-minded individuals and connect with their local REAP committees.
- 4) REAP should sponsor or organize collegiate REAP grant-writing competitions or competitions involving high school government classes.

Discussion: Youth in government competitions. Grant writing competitions (mock REAP grants). Envirothon is a current example.

- 5) The young adults support the REAP CEP funding being raised to \$500,000. Appropriate amount money should be dedicated for CEP.

Discussion: One of the best ways to involve young Iowans is through education. The recommended increase from \$350,000 to \$500,000 will help young adults become more involved.

General discussion: Many REAP stakeholders, with DNR in a leadership roll, will need to be involved in implementation.

10. Motion: **REAP Congress recommends an increased emphasis on public education regarding REAP, including but not limited to more promotion of license plates.** Rebecca McCarley, moved. Dave Weier, second. Vote: Yes: 41, No: 8. Motion passed.

11. Motion: **REAP Congress thanks the Iowa House of Representatives for the use of the state capitol.** Michael Johnson, moved. Roger White, second. Vote: Yes: Unanimous.

12. Motion: **REAP Congress recommends that the Natural Resource Commission, DNR, and a coalition of REAP stakeholders develop a program to activate county resource enhancement committees in all 99 counties and to increase public awareness of REAP in each county.** Roger White, moved. Rebecca McCarley, second. Vote: Yes: 14, No: 37. Motion failed.

- General discussion: Congress delegates need to revisit this issue within their regions.

13. Motion: **REAP Congress thanks the 2009 Iowa Legislature and the Governor for the REAP appropriation of \$18 million.** Margo Underwood, moved. Steve Heldt, second. Vote: Yes: unanimous.

14. Motion: **REAP Congress recommends that the county committees hold an annual public meeting to showcase REAP accomplishments in their counties.** Rebecca McCarley, moved. David Fencl, second. Vote: Yes: 8, No: 48. Motion failed.

15. Motion: **Adjourn the Congress.** Nels Christensen, moved. Hubert Hagemann, second. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Adjourned at 2:13 p.m. January 9, 2010.

