

# THIS IS IOWA UPDATE

SPRING/SUMMER 2017

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The Nature Conservancy is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) international membership organization. Its mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

The Nature Conservancy meets all of the Standards for Charity Accountability established by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. The BBB Wise Giving Alliance is a national charity watchdog affiliated with the Better Business Bureau.

THE MISSION OF THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IS TO CONSERVE THE LANDS AND WATERS ON WHICH ALL LIFE DEPENDS.

# Expanding Our Work



It seems long ago since I joined The Nature Conservancy in Iowa Board of Trustees. Now I help lead a dynamic team of trustees who are as passionate as I am about conservation in Iowa. I am honored to work with these people and the Conservancy staff.

The Conservancy has grown from an organization that solely protected land to one that, while continuing to protect land, also takes a whole-system approach to watersheds, soil and climate change. This approach requires that we work with partners to achieve conservation on a large scale.

We have challenges in Iowa, but we are implementing science-based solutions. The 4R PLUS campaign and Boone River Watershed work (page 6) prove partnerships are valuable. Our Lower Cedar Valley project is experiencing unprecedented growth (page 4). We are restoring wetlands upstream of Sioux City, Council Bluffs, Des Moines, Cedar Falls/Waterloo and Cedar Rapids to help reduce flood risk (page 5). We are making progress but have a long way to go to protect the land and water on which we depend.

We are all part of Iowa's natural systems and we need to restore and protect our home so it is a viable and valuable place for years to come.

The time is now to invest in nature and in Iowa. We can each do something — speak to your representatives about environmental issues and funding. Join us at educational days on our preserves. Practice best conservation and management practices on your own land. Give to The Nature Conservancy in Iowa. Leave a legacy so your children can enjoy our beautiful and bountiful state we call home — This Is Iowa.

Sincerely,

John Aschenbrenner  
*Board of Trustees Chair*

*To learn more about John, visit our [Faces of Conservation at nature.org/Iowa](http://FacesofConservation.atnature.org/Iowa).*

## Meet New Board Member Scott Tinsman

Scott Tinsman lives in the Quad Cities and is the COO of his family's business — Twin State, Inc — a manufacturer of suspension fertilizers. An avid sportsman who loves the outdoors, Scott wants to be sure his children and grandchildren see the beauty of Iowa that he did.



*"I saw an opportunity for an intersection between two entities interested in reducing nutrient loss — the fertilizer industry and The Nature Conservancy in Iowa," said Scott, former president of The Fertilizer Institute. "I hope to bring fresh eyes to the great work already in progress, support the work farmers are doing and advance the dialogue between the groups."*

## THE CHALLENGE

# Disappearing GRASSLANDS

Tallgrass prairie was the basis for biological diversity in Iowa. As European settlement advanced, land use was changed. Now less than one-tenth of 1 percent of Iowa's prairie remains and we've lost 1 million acres of grasslands since 2008.

## Implementing solutions

### Expanding Bison Grazing for Healthier Grasslands

Our 3,291-acre Broken Kettle Grasslands, Iowa's largest remaining native prairie located in the Loess Hills just 20 miles northwest of Sioux City, is a sweeping reminder of nature's beauty.

A herd of 28 bison was reintroduced at Broken Kettle in 2007 to help The Nature Conservancy in Iowa restore prairie habitat. The herd is now 160 bison grazing 1,863 acres. Generous support from the Gilchrist Foundation is helping us move closer to our goal of 250 bison grazing more than 2,600 acres. We recently expanded our corral to accommodate

more bison and added four miles of exterior fencing to expand the grazing area.

The Gilchrist Foundation has pledged \$150,000 to expand our bison herd and grazing area if we can raise an additional \$150,000 by June 30, 2017. The funds will be used to complete the final 3.2 miles of fence and plant prairie and remove invasive trees to give the bison more grass to graze.

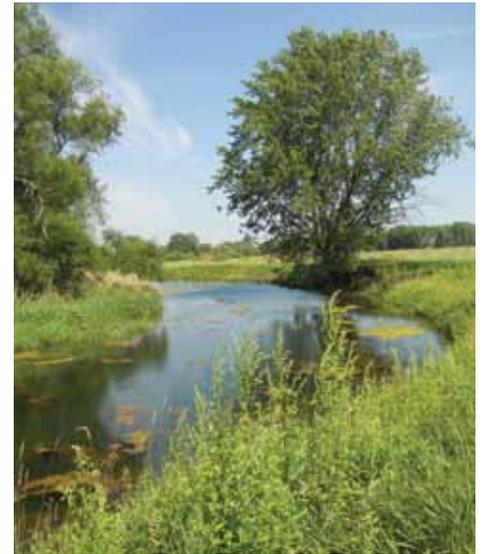
*If you would like to help us meet the Gilchrist Foundation challenge and expand our bison herd, please contact Justin Ray at [jray@tnc.org](mailto:jray@tnc.org) or 515-244-5044 before June 30, 2017.*



## Grand River Grasslands Are Booming

Straddling the Iowa-Missouri border near Lamoni, the Grand River Grasslands are a remnant of a time gone by. Our 3,200-acre Dunn Ranch Prairie is the crown jewel of this area featuring greater prairie chickens and a bison herd.

The greater prairie chicken is well known for its "booming" mating call. Following a successful reintroduction of prairie chickens in the Grand River Grasslands in the 1980s, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of chickens in the late 2000s. To help propagate the species, 100 birds were captured and banded in Nebraska this spring then transported to the Grand River Grasslands and released. Females were fitted with radio collars to track nesting and migration patterns. This is the fifth year prairie chickens have been translocated from Nebraska and the number of prairie chickens in the Grand River Grasslands is rebounding.



## THE CHALLENGE

# Unnatural FLOODING

Lower Cedar Valley is home to endangered and threatened species such as the eastern massasauga rattlesnake and ornate box turtles.

Iowa has experienced three historic floods in the past 25 years, confirming that land use changes and changing precipitation patterns are contributing to more frequent and severe flooding in the state. Yet we still aren't investing sufficiently in the natural infrastructure that can provide lasting solutions to the problem. Restored floodplains and wetlands are examples of how the state can better protect wildlife and millions of Iowans from extreme floods.

## Implementing solutions

### 1 Protecting 1,983 Acres in Lower Cedar Valley

Southeast Iowa's Lower Cedar Valley resembles a land that time forgot. As you drive between majestic hills surrounding the valley that was carved out by glaciers 1 million years ago, you feel oddly disconnected from everyday life. The distinctive hills give way to a floodplain with globally rare swamp white oak savannas and rich peat fens surrounding the Cedar River.

Home to hundreds of plants and animals — including seven endangered, 14 threatened and eight special-concern species — this unique backdrop offers a rich environment for protecting, researching and learning about Iowa. In fact, the region has been dedicated as the nation's first reptile and amphibian conservation area.

The Nature Conservancy in Iowa is happy to announce we've acquired 14 properties totaling 1,983 acres in the Lower Cedar Valley since 2012. These acquisitions improve connectivity between Conservancy lands and make the Lower Cedar one of the fastest growing conservation areas in Iowa. The Conservancy now owns 3,394 acres in the Lower Cedar.

Of course, land acquisition alone is not enough to conserve the rare species of the Lower Cedar Valley. After decades of insufficient management, these lands need invasive species removal, prescribed burning and selective grazing to provide the habitat needed by the Lower Cedar's rare species. The Conservancy recently started a large restoration project to return these stewardship techniques to more than 700 acres.

2

## Restoring Floodplain to Help Reduce Flood Risk for Sioux City and Council Bluffs

The 2011 Missouri River flood cost western Iowans hundreds of millions of dollars in damages to communities, homes, businesses, crops, roads and levees. Unfortunately, scientific models predict increasing Missouri River flood risk in the future with continued land use changes and changing precipitation patterns.

To help farmers impacted by the 2011 flood and reduce future flood risk for communities along the Missouri River, The Nature Conservancy programs in Iowa, South Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas used private funds to secure a large Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for floodplain restoration along the Missouri River. Grant funding has allowed the Conservancy to work cooperatively with farmers and NRCS over the last five years to restore 12 frequently flooded farms totaling more than 2,200 acres into flood water-storing wetlands, including 630 acres upstream of Sioux City and 1,300 acres upstream of Council Bluffs.

These restored sites will act as an “overflow valve” when river waters are high. Added benefits include filtering out nutrients and improving wildlife habitat.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Missouri River is home to 300 species of birds, 150 species of fish, 60 species of mammals, 78 species of reptiles and amphibians and more than 250 species of aquatic insects.

3

## Restoring Oxbow Wetlands to Reduce Flood Risk for Des Moines

The flood of 1993 devastated Des Moines with billions of dollars in damages. The community narrowly escaped another flood in 2008 and recent reports indicate the community's infrastructures are insufficient to handle future extreme floods. Oxbow wetland restorations are one practice The Nature Conservancy is implementing in the Boone River watershed to reduce flood risk upstream of Des Moines.

Oxbows are old stream meanders that are cut off from the original channel. Once restored, oxbows help reduce flood risk by storing 1 million gallons of water per acre, reduce nitrates in this water by 45–90 percent and provide excellent wildlife habitat.

The Conservancy has restored five oxbows in the Boone River Watershed since January 2016, for a total of 22 oxbows restored.

4

## Restoring Wetlands to Reduce Flood Risk for Waterloo and Cedar Rapids

The flood of 2008 was devastating for Cedar Rapids, Cedar Falls-Waterloo and The Nature Conservancy in Iowa preserves in the Lower Cedar Valley. To reduce the risk of similar floods, the Conservancy is restoring wetlands in the Cedar River Basin. Wetlands store 1 million gallons of water per acre while improving water quality, increasing habitat and providing recreation opportunities.

The Conservancy recently restored three wetlands in the basin. Two wetlands totaling 14 acres were restored at the Department of Natural Resources Walnut Bend Wildlife Management Area in Bremer County just upstream of Cedar Falls/Waterloo. A restored oxbow wetland at the Linn County Conservation Board Morgan Creek Park will store and filter water upstream of Cedar Rapids.

# THE CHALLENGE

## Impaired Water Quality and Unsustainable Soil Loss

It's no secret that Iowa's rivers and lakes have high nutrient levels and current levels of soil loss are unsustainable. What's not getting as much attention is the interest in improvement among agricultural, environmental and urban communities.



## Implementing solutions

### A New Path Forward for Improving Water Quality and Reducing Soil Loss

To achieve practice adoption at the necessary scale and rate, organizations and companies in the agricultural supply chain must work together effectively to promote the benefits of conservation to the 90,000 farmers with more than 23 million acres in Iowa.

The Nature Conservancy in Iowa is working with CF Industries, Conservation Districts of Iowa and 20 other organizations to implement a statewide campaign that will increase practice adoption by providing technical assistance, showing the value of practices in maintaining or increasing productivity and profitability and highlighting the downstream impact. The campaign will promote 4R nutrient management, in-field, edge-of-field and downstream practices.



### Reducing Soil Loss in the Boone River Watershed

The Nature Conservancy "reThink Soil: A Roadmap for U.S. Soil Health" sets a path for improving soil health to reduce soil loss, improve water quality, reduce flood risk, improve wildlife habitat, enhance food production and sequester carbon.

The Conservancy is implementing the roadmap in the Boone River Watershed, where farmers are being encouraged to reduce tillage and use cover crops between growing seasons. Both practices reduce soil erosion and improve soil health, which can lead to increased crop yields over time. By allowing soil to hold more water and nutrients, both practices also offer the downstream benefits of better water quality, reduced flood risk and improved wildlife habitat. In the last three years, 12,000 acres of cover crops have been seeded in the Boone River Watershed.



### Conservancy State Programs Convene to Set Mississippi River Strategy

The Mississippi River and its tributaries comprise a basin that covers 1.2 million square miles and parts of 31 states. Conservation success in a basin this large and diverse requires an organization to work in multiple states, partner with agriculture and always think upstream. With this whole-system approach in mind, The Nature Conservancy programs from throughout the basin recently convened to set a common strategy and leverage learning to achieve meaningful, scalable conservation outcomes. Our overarching goal is to improve the health of both the basin and the Gulf of Mexico by reducing nutrient runoff, restoring wetlands and reconnecting floodplains.

# Leaving a LEGACY

IN YOUR HOME STATE



When Lee and Nancy Schoenewe met in college, little did they know how they would impact their home states. Lee, a native of Iowa, and Nancy, a South Dakotan, both shared a passion for nature. They have been members of The Nature Conservancy since 1984.

Lee began sharing his love of birds and nature through writing and speaking engagements and serving on many conservation boards. He became a member of the The Nature Conservancy in Iowa Board of Trustees in 2001 and served through 2016.

The Schoenewes, who make their home in Spencer, wanted to make a lasting gift to conservation in both their home states. They chose to leave a Legacy Gift to The Nature Conservancy in their estate plans. “Nancy and I are happy to be able to leave such a legacy,” says Lee, “and very happy that we can designate the Conservancy programs in both Iowa and South Dakota to receive our gift.”

*Join Lee and Nancy in the Legacy Club through a life income gift or naming the Conservancy in your will, retirement plan or life insurance policy.*



## A Legacy for Generations of Iowans to Come

What better legacy is there to leave than your commitment to sustain Iowa’s beauty and natural resources for generations to come? Many of our members choose to make a gift to The Nature Conservancy in Iowa through their will, trust, retirement account or life insurance policy. Including The Nature Conservancy in Iowa in your plan can have extraordinary benefits for you and this beautiful land.

For more information:

Andrea Solomon  
515-244-5044  
andrea.solomon@tnc.org



Protecting nature. Preserving life.®

The Nature Conservancy cannot render tax or legal advice. Please consult your financial advisor before making a gift.

*Will you be part of the solution to Iowa’s biggest challenges?*

*Help us reach our goal by donating today!*

**Goal:**  
**\$30.9 million**

\$29 MM

\$25 MM

\$20 MM

\$15 MM

\$10 MM

\$5 MM

\$0 MM



**How will you support our This Is Iowa campaign to address the greatest challenges facing Iowans?**

**Join us and become a member of:**

**Last Great Places Society** —  
A gift of \$10,000 or more.

**Conservation Partners** —  
A gift of \$1,000 or more.

**Friends of the Nature Conservancy** —  
A paperless monthly gift.

Contact Director of Philanthropy Justin Ray at 515-244-5044 or jray@tnc.org for more information.

*This is our home. This Is Iowa.*

# Iowa update

SPRING/SUMMER 2017



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Capitol Day 2017 © Julia Fiala

## Fund the Trust Capitol Day 2017

The turnout on April 11 for Fund the Trust Capitol Day exceeded expectations as more than 400 Iowans filled the State Capitol to speak with their legislators about the need to fund the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.

In November 2010, Iowa voters supported a constitutional amendment to create the Trust Fund with 63 percent of the vote. Once funded, the Trust Fund would improve Iowa's water quality, protect our soil, enhance our wildlife habitat and strengthen outdoor recreation. Iowa law requires the legislature to pass, and the governor to sign into law, a sales tax increase of three-eighths of a cent for the Trust Fund, which will generate an estimated \$180 million annually.

Jan Glendening, state director for The Nature Conservancy in Iowa, commented, "It was fantastic seeing people across the state — rural, urban, republican, democrat — speaking up for the Trust Fund. This gives us great momentum to see the Trust funded in 2018."

To get involved, contact Patrick Snell at [patrick.snell@tnc.org](mailto:patrick.snell@tnc.org) or 515-244-5044.

