

Sioux County Conservation Newsletter



Volume 27, Issue 2

Fall 2018

Around the county updates:



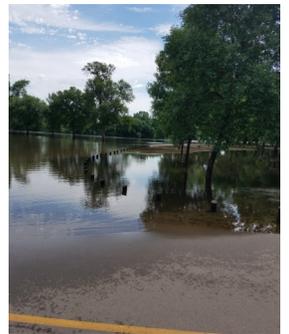
Bruce Schomaker Rec. Area

The Sioux county parks systems have had a busy summer. SCCB has had many visitors in the parks enjoying the swimming beaches, campgrounds and trail system. We were on track for having a record year for visitors until we had a flood rear its head in June, which looking back, is a fairly common month for us to experience flooding. With the flooding, we had to close down three of our 4 campgrounds for a couple weeks to allow waters to recede and damages to be fixed. As of mid July we are officially up and running in all of our parks. We still have a few things to complete including reseeding of the picnic area in the bottom at Oak Grove, road repairs at the Big Sioux Rec Area and a few other areas that have damages remaining. Here are some other updates from the flood and other projects going on in the county.

Oak Grove Park

Myron Dekkers, Park Ranger

This summer has been the season for seeing wildlife at Oak Grove with the “out of their element” look on their faces. When the bottom was flooded in late June and early July, it was very common to see deer and turkey near our Eagle’s Nest and Whitetail Lodge cabins all having the “Now what do we do?” look stamped on them. I even had to relocate a snapping turtle the size of a dinner plate as it had crawled up the hill and ended up by our office at Oak Grove.



(Continued next page)



ATTENTION THERE WILL BE NO TRICK OR TREAT HIKE FOR 2018

It was a hard decision to make but we decided this year with the nature center construction occurring in the Deer Run Campground we would not be able to accommodate this event as in years past. We anticipate bringing the event back in 2019 and look forward to the changes a year can make. The campground will remain open during the construction for those wishing to get out and enjoy the fall weather.



Around the County Updates Continued...



With having the bottom of Oak Grove flooded for several weeks, I had flashbacks to the last big flood we had in 2014. In 2014, we had A LOT of sugar sand coat our grass in the bottom of Oak Grove, along with large trees coming to rest on the boat ramp parking lot. We had quite a few trees go down as well. The flood of '14 also made our gravel road going to the bottom restroom look like a river bed once the waters receded, which required some rebuilding. We even had one of our picnic tables end up 10 feet up in a tree on our neighbor, John Degen property!

Thankfully, in 2018 the river crested a couple of feet less than it did in 2014. This year we had minimal debris come in. We had a little bit of sand along the river's edge, only a few smaller trees got deposited on the boat ramp parking lot, our gravel road going to the bottom restroom only needed some fresh gravel, and of course, we had a few trees go down as well. Our bottom trails will be need to be cleared once they dry out. We had a lot of mud coat the grass in the bottom, so it looks like we will be doing some reseeding this fall.

All in all, the flood damage at Oak Grove could have been a lot worse!

Sandy Hollow Recreation Area Update:

Zach Weyer, Park Ranger



Much of the last month has involved clean up and restoring after the flood of the West Branch. Water was a foot high in the indoor archery and BB gun range. Bland-ex, doors and all items on the ground have been stripped and removed. The beach lost a good portion of sand and was covered in corn stalks. The beach is back to 100%; sand was restored and the water samples have come back well with in the normal healthy limits for E.coli levels. Efforts continue to clean up the park which includes branch removal, grading and eventually planting grass in the areas where the water stagnated too long.

On a good note, the Sandy Hollow Lodge received more updates including a new central air system. Now the building will maintain the same climate in every corner. Before one unit was trying to cool or heat the whole building.

We look forward to more improvements of the park including the boat ramp and placing the bridge to connect the ponds in late summer early fall. Thank you!



Big Sioux Recreation Area Update:

Alex Lynott, Park Ranger

Like the majority of the population in the Midwest, our crew also grew tired of the heavy rains, rising water levels, extreme temperatures and bugs this summer. The rains have stopped and the river has resided back into its banks, but there is still much work to be done to recover from the damage here at the Big Sioux Rec Area. The devastation was a near image of the 2014 flood. The major sigh of relief was the improvements we made on our entrance road to stabilized the road dike held. In 2014, it blew through the road and left a massive crater to fill. We still have massive craters to fill in the other dikes that blew, but the main portion of the park was quick to re-open after the water receded. We have quite a bit of repairs to do on the west half of the park. The river current swept most of our road material away and placed it all on our grassy areas.



Around the County Updates Continued...

The boat ramp, both Meadowlark and Eagle View Campgrounds, and the beach are open! We continue to conduct water quality tests in the swimming area for E. coli levels and the results are always among the lowest in the state. The fishing has been very popular since the flood, many fishermen are catching bass, catfish and bluegill. Despite the river breaching multiple berms and filling the lake, the vast majority of our game fish hunkered down and stayed in the lake, unlike 2014.



We continue to pull trees out of trees, that is, the trees that came in with the river current and became lodged in our existing trees. Our chainsaws are constantly running in order to cut up the flood debris and haul it out.

Our young part-time employees continue to exceed what is asked of them to do every day, in order to get the park back to its original state. In some places, the park looks better than it originally had. It is very rewarding to have young, hardworking employees take pride in their hard work and be rewarded with compliments from our frequent park visitors.

Nevertheless, we are recovering quite well and continue to put hard work into this young park. Even when the Big Sioux decides to rip through here, not a day goes by that I am wishing I worked somewhere else.

Other Updates to note:

We are looking forward to a few big changes coming to the Oak Grove Park. The staff was busy planning for the Sioux County Conservation Foundation's ground breaking ceremony that took place on Wednesday August 1, 2018. With the construction expected to start this fall we plan on keeping the Deer Run Campground open through mid to late October as we traditionally do. Just bear in mind as you come out to enjoy the fall weather that there may be some added noise in the campground from construction during the day time hours. Please be mindful of barricades and the construction area as you are visiting the county park. However, due to the construction as mention on the front of this newsletter, we will not be hosting our annual Trick or Treat event this year, however we do plan on it returning in 2019!



We are also busy working with the Sioux County Off-Road Cyclist to offer a newer attraction to the Oak Grove Park that is to have minimal impact on the grounds. We are busy helping the group create and place a bike trail that will encompass the North portion of the parks timber. Trail signs and some minor construction will be completed prior to making this open to the public to use. However if you enjoy an afternoon off road bicycling you will soon have a new trail to explore right here in Sioux County.

With that said, we are looking forward to the busy fall months as we wrap up another camping season, starting and completing projects that are looking down at us and moving forward on other projects around the county.

Upcoming Programs....

You must register online for all programs, go to www.mycountyparks.com/county/sioux.aspx. No telephone registrations will be taken. Questions on programs please call 712-552-3057, to cancel your registration or for help with online registrations please call 712-552-1047. Weather related cancellations will be aired on 93.9 FM.

September 1- Monarch Watch Family Program- Deer Run Campground, Oak Grove Park

We are seeing monarchs again! Hooray for the effort of keeping milkweed alive! Please join your Sioux County Naturalist in netting and tagging these beautiful creatures as they make their migration south to Mexico. There is no cost, we have a limited number of nets available, so bring your own if you have one. This family friendly event will meet near the cabins in Deer Run Campground from 9:30-11am. Event canceled if raining. Preregistration required.



September 8- Women in the Outdoors- Prairie Heritage Center- Sutherland, IA

Open to ages 14 and up (ages 14-17 with adult). Event hosted at Prairie Heritage Center near Sutherland, IA in O'Brien County from 8am-4:30pm. Courses will include Dutch Oven Cooking, Natural Dying Craft, Cross-bows, Games from the past and a Glacial Landscape Tour. Cost is \$45, includes Dutch Oven lunch. Event hosted by National Wild Turkey Federation, Lyon, Sioux, Osceola, and O'Brien County Conservation Boards. A fun experience for ladies of all backgrounds. Pre-registration required for event fill out form you received in mail, print off from website or call 712/552-3057 for registration information. Form and payment must be sent in.

September 22- Dutch Oven Gathering- Turkey Ridge Campground, Oak Grove

Calling all area Dutch Oven Cookers! We will be hosting a gathering at Oak Grove Park, Turkey Ridge Campground. Dishes include: breads, appetizers, main dishes and desserts. Dishes will be judged with first place awarded in each category, potluck meal afterwards. **You must preregister by calling 712/552-3057** to sign up as a cooker. First 10 cookers to register will receive a free campsite at Turkey Ridge for Saturday night September 22. Public is welcome to come observe and ask questions starting at 3pm. Join us for meal at 6pm bring a dish along to share (does not have to be a Dutch oven dish for potluck).



October 20- Youth Mentor Pheasant Hunt- Rock Valley Gun Club

This event is sponsored by the Sioux Prairie Pheasants Forever and Sioux County Conservation Board. Youth hunt is open to Iowa youth ages 12-15, who have passed their Iowa hunter education course. This event is held at the Rock Valley Gun Club, with hunting in surrounding areas. The day starts at 7:30am with a review of hunting safety, breakfast and a trap shoot. Each group will go into the field with mentors and hunting dogs. The day will conclude at 12:30pm with lunch and hunting stories. There is no cost, but only a limited number will be taken, **must pre-register and print/fill out forms online for event.**



Summer Education 2018

By: Hailey Pullman and Britney Thompson, summer EE Interns

Using an analogy, this past summer has been like the prairie in Oak Grove. Each passing week brings new blossoming flowers and awakens new plants to life in the prairie, adding variety with the different colored blooms. Similarly, the summer has been full of new, blooming possibilities to explore and enjoy the outdoors as the summer progresses!



Throughout the summer, approximately 260 kids were able to join us for a fun time exploring and discovering more of the beauty of nature. Our summer began with Budding Naturalists Camp for 3-4 year olds. This camp is always a blast as the kids learn about nature, play games, hike and decorate their own hiking stick to take home! Continuing into summer, we had Frogs, Snails, and Salamander Tails Camp with the 5-6 year olds. This camp held many fun adventures, from collecting snails for slime trails to learning the difference between frogs and toads. The camp would not be complete without making our own slime though and seeing live animals, such as the snake, salamander and minnows! Following this camp, we started Bug Scouts Camp for the 7-9 year olds. During this camp, the kids discovered the variety of insects located in Oak Grove. They also enjoyed trekking outdoors and using nets to collect bugs for their own insect collection!



For the weeks during summer camp for ages 10-12, what could be more fun than Water Works Camp? The kids learned about the animals of the wetlands and ponds. They also were able to try fishing, hiking, canoeing/kayaking, turtle trapping and macro

hunting. Of course, Water Works Camp would not be complete without swimming! Towards the end of summer, we had a blast with the Hunter Education Overnight Camp! This camp had classroom instruction time, hands-on learning and other fun activities to learn more about the techniques and safety associ-

ated with hunting. In the evening, they were able to try catfishing and a fun night hike with S' mores!

Although the summer camps were a blast, other outdoor education events also added to the fun and beauty of the summer. Early in the beginning of summer, Outdoor Skills Day had lots of fun sessions for the kids to explore. This event, co-sponsored by Sioux County Conservation Board, Sportsman's Club and Iowa State Extension/4H provided a fun outdoor experience to over 300 people! Throughout the summer, there were other outreach education events and library programs, where the kids were able to be animal detectives and discover the sounds that certain animals make. At Sandy Hollow, families joined us for a fishing clinic. The craziest catch of the day was definitely the bull frog! Another exciting day was the Insect Hike led by Jeremy Hummel, a Dordt Professor. This family event was fun for those of all ages! Everyone enjoyed using a large net to sweep the prairie and tall grass to discover the amazing insects, such as bee flies, robber flies, monarch caterpillars, dragonflies, crab spiders and countless other amazing bugs! The summer ended with Ringneck Rendevous. This event was a lot of fun, as the kids went from booth to booth to try different games and outdoor activities. After the prizes and pizza, the event concluded with Royal Gauntlet's show with the birds of prey. Reflecting back over the entire summer, countless outdoor educational experiences and opportunities have blossomed and helped to create a memorable and impactful summer!



Thank you to our Summer Volunteers!



Don't Forget...

- Due to construction starting this fall on the nature center we will **NOT** be hosting our annual Trick or Treat Hike in October.
- Our campgrounds will remain open through mid to late October depending on weather so don't hesitate to bring your camper out and get one last fall weekend camping trip in!
- We will be bringing back the Trick or Treat Hike in 2019 on the second Saturday of October.



Office Notes:

The online reservations system we implemented early spring has been running well, and we hope it has been an easy transition for you as a user to adapt to. With the new system as a reminder, your family is now able to book your next family gathering for next year and the year after, if you wish to book that far out. We have all four cabins, a select portion of campsites and our enclosed shelters available for reservation. We currently have lots of openings for the fast approaching holiday seasons in the Oak Grove Lodge, Sandy Hollow Clubhouse and Big Sioux Shelter are all available so start planning your large family gathering, corporate Christmas parties and other meetings. If you have any questions about reservations please contact the administration office during regular business hours. *All reservations must be made online a minimum of three days prior to reservation and are non refundable.*

Permanent sites will be available for the 2019 camping season at the Big Sioux Recreation Area, Oak Grove Park and Sandy Hollow Recreation Area. Applications for the permanent sites are available on the website the deadline for turning in your application and deposit will be no later than *December 31, 2018*. Drawing for sites will be at our February board meeting. Limited number of sites are available.

With the upcoming construction starting on the nature center we are anticipating an uptick in traffic both construction and visitor related at Oak Grove this fall and coming spring season. As we look forward to the new building being built, we want to remind you to practice extra caution when enjoy Oak Grove Park this fall, whether you are out for your Sunday drive or enjoying a nice fall day hike.

Sioux County Conservation Board



If you would like to be added to the newsletter mailing list please send a postcard with your name and address to:

Sioux County Conservation Board
Oak Grove Park
4051 Cherry Ave.
Hawarden, IA 51023

Sioux County Conservation Board
712/552-1047
conservation@siouxcounty.org
www.mycountyparks.com
www.siouxcountyparks.org

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Zach Weyer- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech- Sandy Hollow
Alex Lynott- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech- Big Sioux Rec. Area
Damon Anderson- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech- Oak Grove
Sarah Davelaar- Naturalist

Meetings

Held the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Administration Office in Oak Grove.

Sioux County Conservation Board
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