

Sioux County Conservation Newsletter



Volume 28, Issue 1

Spring 2019

Sioux County Parks Updates

This winter has been a busy but productive one for the maintenance staff. They have been busy doing updates at the Sandy Hollow Clubhouse including a plank wall, media center and a fresh coat of paint. Equipment maintenance is high on the list of projects completed this time of year as we have the extra time to go through things thoroughly and make all repairs before our busy summer season hits. One of our larger projects we took on this winter was moving the old Buncombe school house. Some minor trials and tribulations were involved in this move. Read on for more information about this project. We are looking forward to the fast approaching spring with hopes the river doesn't flood and we can focus on continuing repairs from last year and moving on with our annual spring burning and the inevitable green grass that will be needing mowed before too long! We are also looking forward to celebrating the 10 year anniversary of the Big Sioux Recreation Area this summer and are looking at approaching the 100 year anniversary of the Oak Grove Park and 60th anniversary of the county conservation board in Sioux County in the next couple of years.



Sandy Hollow Recreation Area

Taylor Deegan- Park Ranger



We are already through the second month of 2019. Time seems to have flown by as we enter this stage of winter. Sandy Hollow has seen less traffic as per usual during this cold and snowy season. Our main visitors during this time of year are ice fishermen, visitors, members using our range facilities and guests who use our trails for walking. One of the interactive things for schools we, as an entire organization, do during the first couple of months of the year are ice fishing clinics. Due to conditions involving snow, wind and temperature some of the fishing clinics got rescheduled this year. That being said, a few of them have already taken place. At Sandy Hollow, we saw mixed results

for ice fishing, most likely due to the effects of the flooding this past year. Bruce Schomaker Recreation Area and the Floyd River Wildlife Complex B, outside of Alton, seemed to show a little better results with some very healthy Crappie and Bluegill being caught. All in all, it seems to have been a fairly good year for those schools ice fishing in Sioux County.

The winter months typically push a lot of our projects indoors, so out at Sandy Hollow we have been busy at work with a few items that were on our to-do list. One of the major things on our list was our continuation of the process of updating the clubhouse. As I am sure many of you already know, the old golf course clubhouse has been solely updated into a facility that can be used for event rentals. It has served in this role for us for the past couple of years but recently we have been putting some much needed cosmetic touches on it to better fit this job. Improvements so far include: the repainting of the entire event area, the addition of an accent wall made out of wood plank, and many other minor changes that have continued to allow it to become a more attractive facility. Some other projects completed during these past few months have included many new habitat structures that are going to be added to our parks and wildlife areas this upcoming spring, maintenance of our equipment that sees most of its use during our busy months and the continued upkeep of our areas which is always an ongoing process. We hope you have a good rest of your winter and look forward to the change in seasons that will bring on the freshness of new life and activity.



(continued on next page)

Oak Grove Park

Myron Dekkers- Park Ranger

This winter has been one of extremes. It amazes me every year how the ponds in our parks go from a comfortable swimming temperature in our warm summer months to “hard water” making ice ranging from 15 inches thick to over 20 inches thick in our good-old Midwest winter months. I am definitely looking forward to our spring months where decent weather will allow our spring projects to get under way. Every spring we look forward to doing controlled prairie burns at a few of our areas. We have our areas divided up on a burn rotation, sometimes burning 100 plus acres, and other times burning far less due to weather conditions.



Here are just a few other projects on our list we are hoping to attack this spring.

We will be doing more reseeding at Oak Grove due to last year's flooding. We reseeded the bottom of Oak Grove due to the flooding we had last summer. The grass was coming in nice...and then we had more flooding in the fall. The floods are also responsible for some tree cleanup we will be doing on some of our trails at Oak Grove. We are also looking forward to doing some repairs and updates on the Big Sioux Shelter and the Turkey Ridge comfort station.

I am also excited to say that this April I have had the privilege to serve on the Sioux County Conservation team for 10 years already! Time does fly, especially when you love what you do. I want to first of all thank God for placing me here and allowing me to do what I love to do. I also want to take a moment to thank the Sioux County Conservation Board members, the Sioux County Conservation staff, my family, and the users of our parks and wildlife areas for making these first 10 years a very memorable adventure for which I am very thankful for.

Big Sioux Recreation Area

Alex Lynott- Park Ranger

I always get excited when I'm told it's time to write an article for the Spring Newsletter! That means spring has to be coming... right? It has been a toe biting, eyelash freezing kind of winter. I found out I can fit three pairs of socks inside my winter boots and they still don't stay warm!

The surrounding creek and river levels have me a little nervous for what spring might bring downstream. The levels have remained above normal and we have quite a bit of snow to melt yet. If everyone could please pump water for their gardens from the Big Sioux River and Dry Creek this year in order to help prevent yet another park destroying flood, I would appreciate it! Feel free to barrel some up and distribute amongst your California friends as well. :)

Spring brings fresh air, fresh flowers, fresh hair cuts and fresh starts. Everything starts fresh! I am looking forward to the work ahead that will give this park a fresh start again after the 2018 flooding turmoil. Every flooding event at the Big Sioux Rec Area seems to add ten years to my life!

This spring will be very therapeutic as we work to reseed grasses, both lawn and natives, in the areas destroyed in the flood. New trees and bushes offer fresh new nesting places for our bountiful number of songbirds. Buds will start budding on our younger trees after their winter dormancy and they will bound in height with spring sunshine and warmth. Our pollinator garden will begin to reveal brilliant colors and the insects will return, very hungry. Migrating birds will stop by, sing their song and stay for a rest as they journey north again. The robins will return home and we will welcome them. Most importantly and excitingly for this Park Ranger is that spring is the season of fire. Fire will be set to our prairie strips and areas of brome grass to promote and boost our native grasses in their efforts to sink deep roots into our landscape and lock the earth in place.

As I mentioned in the previous newsletter, this year is the Big Sioux Rec Area's 10th Birthday! She is in the double digits and we are gifting her with many new projects! The school house project will continue to be under construction and no finish date has been set. The changing station/footwash area that was closed due to flood damage will be renovated and open for park users. A bridge over the canal connecting Eagle View Campground to the boat ramp is currently being designed and will hopefully appear at some point this summer. Our crew will once again clear a path through our timber along the south side of 7th street for the future bike trail. Walking/biking bridges will be constructed on the western riparian trails. We still plan on partnering with the Sioux County Sheriff's Dive and Rescue Team to help place the artificial fish habitat that were put off last year due to the constant high waters and natural disasters.



Come visit us and help us wish this park a happy ten years!

Summer Camps

Join Sioux County Naturalists and interns this summer for outdoor adventures. All summer camps are free of charge. **Pre-registration is required and will start April 1, 2019 starting at 8 am.** Space is limited. All registration must be done online at www.mycountyparks.com/county/sioux.aspx questions please call: 712-552-3057

Ages 3-4: Budding Naturalist- (different activities from last year)

These little naturalists will have a hands-on introduction to nature. Parents/adult must attend. Includes games, crafts, and trail hikes. Camp will run from 8:30- 11 am.

<u>Budding Naturalist</u>	
June 4	June 14
July 18	July 26

Ages 5-6: Animal Detectives

Kids will investigate animal clues in the wild, from tracks to scat. This camp includes hands-on activities, games and fun! Youth must attend both days of camp. We will be offering this camp in the morning and afternoon on available dates. Morning session will run from 9 am- noon, afternoon session 1 pm- 4 pm.

<u>Animal Detectives</u>	
June 11 & 12	June 18 & 19
*Sign up for either morning and afternoon session.	

Ages 7-9: How Nature Works

We will transform the Oak Grove Lodge into our own nature laboratory, as we do a variety of nature experiments. We'll spend time on the trails, play games, and explore... Hands on! Camper must attend full length of camp both days. Camp will run 9 am- 2 pm.

<u>How Nature Works</u>	
June 25 & 26	June 27 & 28
July 10 & 11	July 23 & 24

Ages 10-12: Wilderness Survival

Learn how to make a shelter, tie knots, make a campfire, learn to use a gps unit along with other survival tips at this camp. Youth must attend full length of camp both days. This camp is from 9am-3pm at Oak Grove Park.

<u>Wilderness Survival</u>	
July 16 & 17	July 18 & 19

Ages 13-15: Overnight Camp

This overnight camp at the cabins will be full of outdoor fun with night hikes, archery, and campfire fun. Meals will be potluck. Camper must attend full length of camp. Camp starts at 9:30 am on Tuesday July 30 and ends at 1:30 pm on Wednesday July 31.

<u>Overnight Camp</u>
July 30-31



Upcoming Programs Continued Dates and time to be Determined...

Watch our website for more details on date, time and registration information.

Do You Want To Be An Insect- Oak Grove Park

All Ages are welcomed!

Do you want to be an insect? What would your gigantic world be like? Where would you live, hide, eat, or lay eggs? Let us explore the trails at Oak Grove Park with entomologist and Dordt professor, Jeremy Hummel. We will be armed with nets and Ziploc bags for a catch and release hike. Meet at the parking area near the cabins in Deer Run Campground at Oak Grove. The trail is not stroller friendly, you will need bug spray, sunscreen and water bottle. Cancelled if raining.



Photo: Gretchen Vande Poppe

Family Fishing Clinic- Rivers Bend Campground, Rock Valley

All ages are welcomed! (8 years and under must have an adult present)

Join us at the Rivers Bend Campground for a fun morning of fishing. Those 16 and over must have valid fishing license to fish. Fishing poles and bait are available or bring your own. Event is cosponsored with City of Rock Valley.

Nature Center Project Updates

Sunday Ford, Assistant Director/EE Coordinator

When the wind blows and the real feel is -20, you know you are a hardy lowan, but rarely do we experience these temperatures and snowfall late January into the second week of February! With that said, construction projects go on! Thanks to the hearty crew of Nelson Construction, your Sioux County Nature Center is coming to life. We have watched the masonries finish all of their blockwork; and framing and trusses have been delivered and will soon be placed over the classroom, east end of building, and finally garage. The structural steel has been set by PR Construction. Nelson Construction is anticipating having the basement enclosed and heated by early March. Our CMBA architects have our tile and carpet on the way, and our interior designer has been busy with animal footprints in the concrete that will line some of the walkways.

Meanwhile, we are busily approving and critiquing graphics from Split Rock Studios. We will soon be delivering our taxidermies to their shop in St. Paul, MN so that the exhibits are top notch and professional. Your education team has been busy organizing and labelling supplies to be moved into the new building and organizing volunteer details for the new center. It is our hope that the community will take great pride in this building and that we will have some that would like to greet guests, help with projects, feed animals, help with landscaping, catalog artifacts, and other opportunities related to the new center. We are also working on field trip organization so that each grade can have a field trip to the Nature Center, without having to repeat what they would get in other grades. We are working with the Next Generation Science Standards towards this goal.



We are also still in fundraising! It is our hope that seeing the construction of the nature center will encourage donations towards this project. Keeping our kids local, improving the quality of life for families in Sioux County, and having a welcoming place for our guests are just some of the things we will see. Please email conservation@siouxcounty.org to receive a pledge card, or go to www.siouxcountyparks.com to donate safely online. For larger donations, there is also an opportunity for sponsoring an exhibit.

For monthly updates check out our Nature Center page on our website!

2019 Rates and Fees

Camping

Big Sioux Rec. Area

Electric/Water- \$20

Online Reservation- \$25

Full hook up- \$22

Online Reservation- \$27

Bruce Schomaker Rec. Area

Electric/Water- \$18

Oak Grove

Electric- \$18

Online Reservation- \$23

Tent Site- \$13

Sandy Hollow Rec. Area

Electric- \$18

Electric/water- \$20

Full hook up- \$22

Online Reservation-\$27

Vehicle Passes (Big Sioux Rec. Area/Sandy Hollow Rec. Area)

Day pass- \$5

Annual pass- \$20, second vehicle registered same day/same family \$10 per additional pass.

Water Crafts (Big Sioux Rec. Area/Sandy Hollow Rec. Area)

2 canoes and 2 kayaks available- hourly \$5 first hour, \$1 per hour after

2 paddleboards- Big Sioux Rec. Area only- \$10 first hour, \$1 per hour after

Off Site Watercraft Rental, must make reservation prior to use, and able to transport.

6 canoes & 4 kayaks- \$18 a day (5+ hrs.), \$10 half day use off site

*Off site use restricted to local areas only.

Shelters

Open shelters are located throughout the county no charge, first come first served.

Alton Roadside Park

Enclosed Shelter- \$40

Oak Grove

Big Sioux Shelter- \$30

Oak Grove Lodge- \$150 (\$200 damage deposit)

Sandy Hollow Rec. Area

Clubhouse- \$250 (\$250 damage deposit and group entrance fee)

Cabins

All located at Oak Grove, 2 night minimum stays during the summer months, closed during off season.

Eagles Nest & Whitetail- \$65 a night

Bluegill Bungalow & Foxes Den- \$75 a night

More details on facilities and rentals available online at www.siouxcountyparks.org



Seasonal Job Openings

Do you enjoy working outdoors, painting, mowing, interacting with youth, cleaning? We have openings for seasonal summer help at various parks managed by the Sioux County Conservation Board. We have opening for the following positions: gate attendants at the Big Sioux Rec. Area and Sandy Hollow Rec. Area, seasonal maintenance positions at Big Sioux Rec Area, Oak Grove and Sandy Hollow Rec. Area.

- Seasonal maintenance positions will be responsible for janitorial work in rental facilities and general parks, painting/staining, string trimming, cutting firewood, mowing and other jobs as assigned. Knowledge on running various equipment helpful. Typical hours are 8am- 4:30pm and may include some weekends.
- Gate Attendants at Big Sioux Rec. Area and Sandy Hollow Rec. Area will be responsible for monitoring the entrance and exit of the park, assuring guest have vehicle passes, answering any questions on park, janitorial cares, sales of candy/snack items, watercraft rentals and other tasks as assigned. Typical hours are 10 am- 8pm times are flexible, hours will include weekends, holidays and evenings.

Please see online at www.mycountyparks.com for further details on employment opportunities. Applications for seasonal maintenance and gate attendants available online.

Seeking Nature Center Volunteers!!!

We are seeking dynamic volunteers to fulfill a much-needed niche at our NEW Sioux County Nature Center! Whether you are seeking an inspiring setting in which to give back to the outdoor community; are a college student looking to fulfill internship credit hours; a senior looking to enjoy retirement; or an instructor wishing to spend a summer in a county park setting, all are invited to share their unique talents and passion for the outdoors with our park visitors.

The nature center is located in Oak Grove Park overlooking a spectacular vista. Inside will be filled with interactive displays with information regarding our local habitats, history and culture for visitors to explore. The center will become the SCCB Environmental Education headquarters, hosting field trips, nursing home picnics, summer camps and family events. Volunteers will greet guests as they visit, answer basic questions and assist in small nature center related tasks. Volunteer hours vary including weekend, weekday, morning ,afternoon or evening shifts. We are still figuring out our layout of shifts we need covered.

Once we have a better idea overall we will send out more information or include it in our summer newsletters. Please think about joining us in this new adventure. Other volunteer opportunities are currently available with summer camps and special events. Please fill in a volunteer application on our website www.siouxcountyparks.org/support/volunteer/ or stop in the office for a hard copy. Stay tuned as we need you!

Conserving More Than Just Land

By: Alex Lynott- Park Ranger

If you are a Hawarden native or surrounding area local, you may have used the old white school house with a teal roof as a land marker to tell someone where to look for their turn at the B46 and Highway 10 North intersection. If you are a local local, you would better know this location as Bob Hodoway's place. Well, we stole your land marker and we're coming for the outhouses too! Now, you will notice the rubble of foundation left behind. We made off with the building and are keeping it in hiding until we are ready for its big reveal!



The Buncombe Township Schoolhouse was built in the 1890s for \$150. Materials for the building were purchased down in Sioux City and delivered to the site on a wagon pulled by a few horses. I wonder if the horses complained that their journey was uphill both ways. A kindergarten through eighth grade education was served here and after the Buncombe students finished eighth grade, they went to high school at the Hawarden High School.



This school house project will be the epitome of a work in progress. One or several may even question our decision to accept the building project versus declining, letting it get bulldozed, and building a replica. What fun is a replica? She has great bones for being around 130 years old! Yes, I'm still talking about the school house. It currently sits on its new foundation here at the Big Sioux Recreation Area in a part of the park that is not yet open for traffic, but you can definitely see the

big white structure through the trees. Its location is very secluded and separated from the rest of the park traffic. The backyard is a very dense forest where visitors will be treated with a wide variety of wildlife viewings. There is no end date in mind, especially as we fight the winter extremes to even get a good start on it. Please be patient with us while we do the construction and designing ourselves. I promise the end result will be epic!

Our vision for this project is to result in a family size rentable cabin. It will have a finished basement, 1.5 to 2 bathrooms, 2 to 3 bedrooms, a full kitchen, laundry and has the potential for a lofted bedroom. Many of the original items such as the school books, chalkboards, school desks, benches, cabinets, doors, etc. are going to be incorporated into the final project. The goal is to keep the history aspect still very much a conversation piece for those staying in it!



Can you imagine all the stories this building could tell? Even the American Elms and Silver Maple trees on the property must have seen so much history and change over the hundred years. That's why we didn't tear it down and "replicate." It's for the memories of the past and the memories in the future it will create for many more families to come!

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

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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