

# Sioux County Conservation Newsletter



Volume 26, Issue 3

Winter 2017

## Sioux County Park Updates...

Robert Klocke, Director

This might be the winter newsletter but the weather has hardly been acting that way and the work load just seems to keep piling up. However we have made real strides with some of our larger projects. Let's run through those for a minute. Oak Grove: Oak Grove Lodge Trail Bridge, Oak Grove Lodge remodel, Deer Run electrical upgrade complete on half of the campground. Big Sioux Recreation Area: new campground, modern comfort station, security camera system, canoe and kayak rental building and beach changing room. Sandy Hollow Recreation Area: registration building, pond renovations and expansion, swimming area improvement, Clubhouse remodel, additional sewer at sites in campground. Still in progress out there include boat ramp, jetties, walking bridge and shoreline armoring. Other parks and items completed this year include: Doorenbos addition to Otter Creek land closing and grant completion, 300 acres of spring seeding for land, controlled prairie burn of about 180 acres, website updates, and other smaller projects.

Currently we are fundraising for a very nice new Nature Center at our Oak Grove Park. We are over half way of the total project cost. We have applied for a grant on it as well but still need to raise 1 million or so. Please take a look at the mailing that went out or you can contribute online. See more later in this newsletter.



Mid-September Sioux County and Lyon County Conservation Boards hosted the Statewide County Conservation Board Conference. It was a three day jam packed event, with tours to each counties prominent areas, pre-conference activities, vendor evening fish fry and a banquet. It was a huge success with 160 folks and a lot of information shared and learned. A big thanks to our staff, board and Lyon County personnel for doing an amazing job! I would also like to recognize Jessica Van Oort our office assistant with taking on the brunt of the registration responsibilities as well as many other duties.

With all that has been accomplished over the last year, we still have a lot to do. We have to finish the pond renovations, expand the camping, and add cabins at Sandy Hollow. We hope to break ground in the new year on the nature center at Oak Grove, along with finish electrical upgrades and add additional playground equipment. At the Big Sioux Recreation Area we have plans to transform an old one room school house into a cabin, pave some trails and additional campsites along with some road improvements.

## Oak Grove & Big Sioux Park

Myron Dekkers, Park Ranger

With the nice weather we have been able to prep fire lanes at Oak Grove and additional areas for our spring controlled prairie burns. It is fun to see our prairies come alive after our burning season. The native forbs and grasses flourish after our burns knock down their competition.

You may have noticed on your latest park visit this fall that some of the entrance pine trees were looking rather ill and dying. These trees we suspect have been infected with pine wilt. It is a disease that is caused by a nematode (microscopic round worms) that feed and reproduce in the resin channels of the tree (where water is carried). The nematodes are spread by a wood boring insect called the pine sawyer beetle. The primary species of pine affected is the Scot's pine, which unfortunately



is one of the most commonly planted ornamental pine species in Iowa. If a tree is rapidly declining or already dead removal is the best option. We have been busy cutting many of these trees and moving them to a central location, with plans to burn the dead pines once it is safe to do so. So, if you happen to notice that we are missing a few trees in the southeast end of the park that is the reason.

### Big Sioux Recreation Area

Alex Lynott, Park Ranger



The prolonged nice weather has been much appreciated at the Big Sioux Recreation Area. There have been several projects completed during the warm weather that would have been brutal or impossible to do with snow or freezing temperatures. Forty trees were planted in the Meadowlark Campground: Big Leaf Lindens, Little Leaf Linden, Red Maples, Sugar Maples, Mountain Ash, and Bur Oaks. They continue to be watered until the next big freeze.

Once winter officially sets in there are plenty of projects that we will be completing inside including: taking down some current signs that need to be repainted and stained, along with making new signs for the park. We will be staining fence posts and rails this winter in anticipation of creating designated parking areas around the park. Another project I am excited for is creating artificial fish habitats. Artificial aquatic plants will be constructed out of recycled vinyl siding and cinder blocks. The idea behind this is to create better spawning and hiding habitats that mimic realistic lake bottom plants. These artificial plants will be able to sway with the water's natural current.

The eagles are slowly moving in. Each morning there are about six bald eagles perched in the trees around the big lake. At about 10 o'clock they begin their morning fishing routine. Once the wind picks up, they disappear to the river, but return once again in the evening when the wind dies back down. I cannot wait until they show up by the hundreds again!

Next year's focus is going to be directed towards the quality of the lake itself. We will be working on removing invasive grasses and sedge species from the current shoreline. Areas that have been seeded with native prairie grasses will receive a spring burn and with a little luck, those native species will grow and flourish around the lake. As always, I am anxious for spring to arrive so I have my part time crew back and we can get going on some big projects, but it is very important to regroup during this quiet season and be prepared to make more changes to the park come 2018!

### Sandy Hollow Recreation Area

Zach Weyer, Park Ranger

We have been busy installing additional septic lines to ten more sites at the campground, which brings us up to 13 full hook up sites out of 37 current sites. The clubhouse is in its final phase of remodeling which is of the storage rooms and a meeting room both of which will receive carpet tiles this winter.

The registration building is also in its final phases, flooring and trim work. This building will house amenities such as ice, firewood, vehicle registrations, watercraft rental and snacks. This building will provide a spot for all park visitors to obtain their vehicle stickers the same day and receive any information on the park.



The ponds are about to become one. We are working on a walking bridge to be placed where the old service road is. Once the bridge is complete the two ponds will be connected. Two rock jetties, a boat ramp and dock will also be installed. One jetty will be by the shade shelter and another off of the lodge. Fish habitat was sunk around the large cottonwood tree, and should make for great ice fishing. The new beach should be up and running by the time swimming season rolls around. This will serve as the only swimming beach at this area. The one currently located by the campground will be closed and will serve as fishing space.

*We all look forward to what the new season brings in all of our parks and want to thank you the public for your support of our many projects. We hope you have a great winter and are able to get out and enjoy your county parks.*

**Reminder that vehicle passes expire December 31, 2017, new vehicle passes are available for purchase at entrance of both the Big Sioux Rec Area and Sandy Hollow Rec Area.**

## Rentals, online, and website updates...

This past November we launched our new website for the Sioux County Conservation Board. The new website has a lot of information pertaining to our upcoming programs and activities sponsored by the conservation board, along with all the recreation opportunities offered throughout the county. You will also find information about all of our parks, rental opportunities, fees and much more! You will find this information at [www.siouxcountyparks.org](http://www.siouxcountyparks.org).

We are also now able to provide teachers with an online tool in determining what programs are offered to fit in with what they are teaching. All current programs offered are listed. In the near future we hope to update our program listing to reflect the science standards our programs are meeting. In addition to classroom programs, you can also find information about our field trips. If you are interested in having one of our naturalist visit your classroom you can request a program via the program request form on the site and we will be happy to help you out. If you have a new program or topic that you do not see on the list contact us and we will develop a program to fit your needs.

This website also features a home on the web for the Sioux County Conservation Foundation. Through this section of the site we will be able to keep you updated on progress of current projects and items as needed pertaining to the Foundation. We are also now able to take donations towards the Foundation through the site as well via pay pal.

Coming in 2018 we will be offering online reservations for our cabins, enclosed shelters and a portion of our campsites at select campgrounds. This will make it easier to plan your next family gathering, wedding, retreat or other events for your group! There will be a large selection of our campsites that remain available on a first come first served basis, as they have been in the past. You will be able to access our online reservation through our main website or from [www.mycountyparks.com/County/Sioux.aspx](http://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Sioux.aspx). Be aware of rate change effect January 1, 2018.

Also new for 2018, we will be offering 3 campsites at each Big Sioux Recreation Area, Oak Grove/Big Sioux Park and Sandy Hollow Recreation Area as permanent seasonal campsites. These sites will be available April 15- October 15 (or October 10 for Oak Grove). These sites will be available to those that enter their names into a lottery drawing. Entry forms can be obtained online or by calling the main administration office at 712-552-1047. Form will need to be turned into the administration office on or before **January 22, 2018** along with \$50 application fee. You will receive this application fee back if your application is not drawn for a site. Application fee will only be deposited if you forfeit your site upon drawing or do not return your site deposit after securing site. Cost for permanent sites will be \$1,656 for Oak Grove, or \$1,800 for Big Sioux Recreation Area and Sandy Hollow Recreation Area. Oak Grove sites will require the user to empty and maintain their own septic tanks, sites are electric only. Big Sioux Recreation Area and Sandy Hollow Recreation Area sites will have septic, water, and electrical services at site. Drawing for sites will occur at our monthly board meeting on February 7 at approximately 6:30 pm.

<u>Camping Rates</u>					<u>Facility</u>	Location	Price
	Electric	Electric/Water	Electric/ Water/Sewer	Tent Sites	Alton Roadside Park	Alton	\$40
Alton Roadside Park	\$12				Big Sioux Shelter	Oak Grove	\$30
Big Sioux Rec Area		\$20	\$22		Bluegill Bungalow & Foxes Den Cabin	Oak Grove	\$75
Bruce Schomaker Rec Area		\$18			Eagles Nest & Whitetail Cabin	Oak Grove	\$65
Oak Grove	\$18			\$13	Oak Grove Lodge	Oak Grove	\$150
Sandy Hollow Rec Area	\$18	\$20	\$22		Open Shelters	Various Parks	\$0
					Sandy Hollow Clubhouse	Sandy Hollow	\$250

Reminder: Cabins require a 2 night minimum most weekends, deposits and other fees may apply, please see our website for complete details or call the main office at 712-552-1047 to inquire about hosting special events (wedding, large gatherings).

## Sioux County Conservation Foundation: Trying to close this year strong!

The Sioux County Conservation Foundation (SCCF) campaign to fund a new nature center at Oak Grove Park has surpassed more than \$2.4 million in local fundraising as of the end of November! But they are not done yet. The committee is working hard to raise the remaining \$1.2 million needed to secure the \$600,000 Enhance Iowa Grant come January. They need your support. Cal De Ruyter, committee volunteer of Rock Valley, says the following, "I know a lot of people are thinking about this but now is the time to step up and make a gift so we can continue to leverage all potential sources of funding. This is a unique opportunity for us to come together as a county to meet the needs of all our students for several generations!" Any gifts made to the Foundation are tax-deductible and will help move this project forward. Check out the projects progress at [www.siouxcountyparks.org/nature-center/](http://www.siouxcountyparks.org/nature-center/). Donations towards the project can also be given at this site. Please consider helping the Foundation meet their goal by the New Year with the needed \$1.2 million to secure the grant. "We know it is a lot to ask but this is a generous community and we hope donors will recognize the value in the building that will become a home for conservation, education and recreation in our county for the next three or four generations. By pledging your support, you are making a statement about what is important," stated Capital Chairman, Gordon Pottebaum of Alton. The capital campaign committee thanks you for your consideration and asks if you have any questions to get in contact with them. Contact information can be found on their web site [www.siouxcountyparks.org/sioux-county-conservation-foundation/](http://www.siouxcountyparks.org/sioux-county-conservation-foundation/).



## 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, and a naturalist intern position at Oak Grove.

- 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 parks, janitorial cares, sales of candy/snack items, watercraft rentals and other tasks as assigned. Typical hours are 10 am- 8pm, hours will include weekends, holidays, and evenings.
- Naturalist interns will be working with the education staff presenting programs to those of all ages and in all locations of Sioux County. They will also be helping with summer camps and other programs. Position will be based at Oak Grove. Resume and references may be sent to Sioux County Conservation, Attn: Sunday Ford, 4051 Cherry Ave, Hawarden, IA 51023. Applicants pursuing education or conservation field preferred. Typical hours are 8am-4:30pm, and may include some Saturdays.

**Please see online at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com) for further details on employment opportunities, applications for seasonal maintenance and gate attendants available online.**

# Upcoming Programs...

You must **register online** for all programs, go to [www.mycountyparks.com/County/Sioux.aspx](http://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Sioux.aspx) to register. *No telephone registrations please.* Questions on program please call 712-552-3057, to cancel your registration or need help with online registration, please call at 712-552-1047. Weather related cancellations will be aired on 93.9 FM.

## January

**20 Public Ice Fishing/Snowshoe Clinic-** Whether you love ice fishing or interested in learning more about it, join us on the ice from 10 am- noon at the Big Sioux Rec Area, just west of Hawarden. Bring a sack lunch or snacks and a bucket to sit on and we will provide the rest! We will pre drill the holes, provide bait, poles, and discuss the types of fish you may catch and equipment being used. There is no cost for this event, entry fee to the park is waved during the time of the program. **Preregistration is required** for event, those age 16 and over actively fishing must have a valid Iowa fishing license.



## February

**9 Owl Prowl-** February is a great time for hearing owls during their courtship and egg-laying season. Join us for a night hike to call owls from 6-8 pm, **preregistration required.** We will meet at the Oak Grove Lodge for an introduction on owls and instruction. Then we will spend time hiking and calling for owls including barred, great horned, and screech owls. Dress warmly and feel free to bring a flashlight covered with a red cloth or cellophane.



Photo by Nathaniel DeJong

## March

**24 Hunter Safety Field Day-** Those ages 11 and over are invited to join us at Sandy Hollow Rec Area from 9 am- 3pm for the hunter safety field day. Online registration at the [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) website required along with online class work completed prior to class. The Saturday class will cover firearm safety, hunting ethics, hunting laws and much more; final exam will be given at end of the day. Students will need to bring a sack lunch and snacks for the day. Must attend full day. We will be shooting outdoors, please dress accordingly.



**Mark your Calendars for our annual summer programs, registration will open approximately 2 months prior to event.**

- |                                   |                                    |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Summer Camp Registration: April 2 | Ringneck Rendezvous: August 4      | Dutch Oven Gathering: September 22 |
| Outdoor Skills Day: June 7        | Hunter Safety Field Day: August 14 | Trick or Treat Hike: October 13    |
| Family Fishing Clinic: June 9     | Women in the Outdoor: September 8  | Youth Mentor Hunt: October 20      |

# 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  
soococon@siouxcounty.org  
www.mycountyparks.com  
www.siouxcountyparks.com

## Board Members

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Dave Meylink- Vice Chairperson  
Jerry Jensen-Member  
Brian Oordt- Member  
Josh Boersma- Member

## Staff

Robert Klocke- Executive Director  
Sunday Ford- Assistant Director/EE Coordinator  
Jessica Van Oort- Office Assistant  
Myron Dekkers- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech. - Oak Grove  
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  
Oak Grove Park  
4051 Cherry Ave  
Hawarden, IA 51023  
Return Service Requested

Standard Mail  
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