

**Regular Meeting  
Buchanan County Conservation Board  
May 19, 2020**

**This meeting was held electronically only due to concerns with COVID-19 and social distancing which made an in-person meeting impossible or impractical. Public agenda notice was posted at the Nature Center and placed on the Conservation Board website with instructions for the public to call-in or use the Zoom login.**

The regular May meeting of the Buchanan County Conservation Board was called to order at 6:00 pm by Board President Loren Hamilton. Board members present were Anita Miller, Andy Crump, Ron Wolfe, and Mary Jean Blaisdell. Others present: Executive Director Dan Cohen and Assistant County Engineer Alex Davis.

Motion Crump/Miller to approve April 21 and May 6, 2020 meeting minutes and the May 19 agenda. All Ayes motion carried.

The Board reviewed the Claims Report. Motion Miller/Blaisdell to approve claims as shown below. All aye.

Alliant Utilities	\$578.94	ICCS	\$2,000.00
Bob Denny	84	Ind. Plumbing	155.98
Brenda VanDeWalker	79	Jacob Schwarting	11.00
Bruening Rock	9	Jill Overmann	64
Capital Sanitary	1,158.22	JD Financial	336.13
Christopher Smith	518	Katrina Early	259
Consolidated Energy	268.30	Knapp's	24.39
Diane Johnson	303.20	Kristina Ladage	88.00
Eastern Ia Excavating	86,308.71	Melanie Schwartz	259.00
Elaine Walker	334.25	Michael Hogle	64
Friends Fontana Park	93	Oelwein Publishing	108.99
Grainger	1,169.37	Rodney Coohy	214.50
Ia Regional Utilities	328.95	Steve Olson	48
Todd Fisher	54	Visa	260.00
Tracey Latham	44	Vern's True Value	188.98
Waste Mgmt	77.75		

The Board reviewed bid packet documents, provided in advance of the meeting, for the project to install concrete steps from the Main Shelter to Otter Creek and to make repairs to the dam spillway at Fontana Park. Davis answered questions and further described the project. Motion Wolfe/Miller to approve bid documents and advertise for sealed bids to be opened during the June 16, 2020 Conservation Board meeting. All aye.

Davis left the meeting

The Board reviewed documents provided in advance of the meeting regarding phased easing of restrictions for public use of facilities and attending in-person education programs. Phase 1 for facilities included opening campgrounds but keeping showerhouses, nature center, playgrounds, and shelters closed. Cabins will be allowed to open for weekend-only reservations. Phase 1 for education programs include allowing in-person outdoor programs to be held for groups of 10 or less, and with requirements for adult supervision of children, mask-wearing, social distancing, and other measures. Motion Wolfe/Miller to adopt Phase 1 lifting of Covid-19 restrictions for facilities and education programs. All aye.

The Board discussed the offer of a gift of 1.5 acres of land from Peter Greco, located next to the Conservation Board's Otter Creek Roadside Park. Motion Miller/Blaisdell to accept the offer. All aye.

The Board discussed an offer of a gift of 13 acres of land from the Lucille Weisert Estate. The area is landlocked and the donors do not wish to grant any easement. The Board chose not to act on accepting the gift and suggested the family reach out to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation as means for protection.

The Board discussed proceeding with the Professional Services Agreement with Shive-Hattery for the purpose of developing a Master Plan and several designs/cost opinions for projects at Fontana Park, as discussed during February, March, and April Board meetings. Cohen stated he had updated the Board of Supervisors regarding the Conservation Board's planning process and its plan to enter into an agreement with Shive-Hattery with cost paid through the Conservation Reserve Fund. Feedback from the Board of Supervisors was positive, with a comment about considering any impact(s) of a park lodge competing with private sector venues. Motion Wolfe/Miller to proceed with Shive-Hattery Professional Services Agreement. All aye.

Cohen informed the Board of an easement request from Iowa Regional Utilities Association. The easement is for installation and maintenance of a water line bored under Otter Creek Roadside Park. Motion Miller/Blaisdell to request the Board of Supervisors move forward with the public hearing process to allow the easement to be granted. All aye.

The Director's Report was provided as follows:

- Attended meetings all meetings via ZOOM or conference call: Buchanan County Supervisors; Buchanan County Department Heads on Covid-19; Bird Friendly Iowa; Buchanan County Tourism Marketing; Buchanan County Economic Development; Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area.
- Field Staff: Staff cut/sprayed/pulled invasive shrubs and garlic mustard; bladed roads (and rocked some sites); checked nest boxes; maintained equipment; readied shower houses, planted trees; conducted private lands plantings and food plot at Crumbacher; picked up garbage; patrolled; etc. Social distancing and strategy for safe use of equipment and vehicles was implemented. Jacob Schwarting began work.
- Naturalist Staff: Naturalists mostly worked from home and in the field. Michael is allowed to use Emergency Sick Leave to help with caring for children due to day cares

being closed. All educational/recreational programs were canceled and refunds were issued, as per Board decision. Michael worked mostly on website updates and developed Facebook videos and QR Birding and Wildflower programs, and worked on a nest box display. Sondra wrote articles, did some painting, and continued with a “Baby Bison Bingo” initiative to help get people to social distance outdoors.

- Placed a sign order for various signs for Iron Bridge Access, Bearbower sign replacement, signs for education hunters about tree stand rules, and more.
- Spoke on the Board of Supervisors agenda about facilities and education updates, and about ongoing master plan work with Shive-Hattery, as per the April Board Meeting. (agenda item).
- Followed up with Benton County regarding potential purchase of 2.3 acres separating Koutny Pond from the new Benton County wetland from Craig Albert. Alberts had not yet responded to talk about this (agenda item).
- Received a request from Iowa Regional Utilities Association (rural water) to bore under Otter Creek Roadside Park, requiring an easement agreement (agenda item).
- Worked with Buchanan County Tourism on the upcoming county visitor’s brochure.
- Alex Davis completed bid plans for the Fontana steps and spillway project. Copies will be sent to Board Members ahead of the May meeting, for approval. We have grant extensions from FEMA/Homeland Security to complete the project by October 30, 2020 (agenda item)
- Looked at the area near Otter Creek Roadside Park that was offered as a donation to the Board (agenda item).
- Received an offer from an estate to donate land in Perry Township from Lucille Weisert (Ohl Realty) – about 13 acres (landlocked).
- Continued monitoring nest boxes – with some good success this year.
- Developed phased plans for restarting facilities and education programs. These were shared with public health, county attorneys, emergency management, and other county conservation boards. The Board acted on these issues during a special meeting on May 6, with an opportunity to reassess on May 19 meeting. The Governor has since made more proclamations and the DNR is directed to remove most restrictions (agenda item).
- Participated in several ZOOM meetings (Board of Supervisors and SSNHA, BCED) regarding responses, policies, etc. related to Covid-19.
- Wrote several articles pertaining to garlic mustard, spring sightings in county areas. Sondra also submitted articles.
- Conducted weekly staff meetings mostly via ZOOM, and sent memos to staff with Covid policies and work lists (items completed and items yet to complete) – met in person with staff yesterday with social distancing. Staff is back at work on site, with exceptions for day care (Michael). People with doctor excuses (vulnerable) still are urged to work from home. Board meetings also were conducted via ZOOM, with minutes taken by Director.
- Visited with county sanitarian and well-plugger to finally get the wells at Cortright plugged. I also brought up the possibility of plugging the Lime Creek well where there is a very old hand pump that get very little use.
- Visited almost daily with contractors and Secondary Roads staff at Iron Bridge Access since work began April 1. All concrete work was completed, and most other work is done. I requested DNR Rivers Coordinate come and review the project, who gave it a thumbs up. Street lamps are on backorder. Minor fixes to allow drainage and fix a crack

in a small section of concrete will need to be addressed prior to end of work (agenda item).

- Purchased bollard barricades to keep vehicles off new paved trails at Iron Bridge/Grover, as per April Meeting. These were placed.
- Assisted field staff with planting 2,600 tree seedlings. Most trees were planted at Roberts Wildlife Area and Jakway Forest.
- Calf was born to a bison on May 9. A lot of social media buzz occurred, with a parade of vehicles. Unfortunately, the calf died on May 18, from an apparent birth defect.
- Work began on a summer newsletter, to be distributed through Print Express vs the use of volunteers. Programming will be unique due to Covid-19.
- Vandalism occurred at Hodges & North (vehicle pushed through posts and cable) and at Boies Bend (pulling out signs and dumping garbage). Ordered concrete barricades with a plan to reduce the size of the parking lot at Hodges & North.

Motion Wolfe/Blaisdell to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.