

Spring 2022

Conservation Connection

Johnson County Conservation Newsletter

Exciting Updates to the Kent Park Campground

Larry Gullett - Executive Director

In November, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors appropriated funding to replace the campground shower house, restroom, and associated wastewater systems within Kent Park's Campground. Funding was sourced from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) targeting water quality as a priority. Construction documents for the project were completed in 2017 and the project was put on hold until funding could be secured. The total estimated cost of the project is approximately \$3.4 million.

In addition to providing updated access and facilities for use by campers within the main campground and nearby Youth Group Camp, the project will improve water quality within

Kent Park Lake. Visitation to Kent Park has more than doubled in the last two years likely due to the highly successful lake restoration project, as well as the widespread rediscovery of the outdoors with the COVID-19 pandemic. About 650 people per day depend on the campground and associated facilities during the high use season. During 2020 alone, 15,616 camper nights were recorded at Kent Park.

Consequently, during the summer seasons of both 2020 and 2021 wastewater entering the existing system exceeded the design capacity on an almost weekly basis. Staff noticed the increased nutrient load within the Kent Park Lake during routine water quality monitoring and were able to source this decrease in water

Continued on page 4



Front view of the shower-house/restroom to be constructed at the entrance of the Kent Park Campground and adjacent to the Youth Group Camp. The facility will provide 12 single user restroom-showers.

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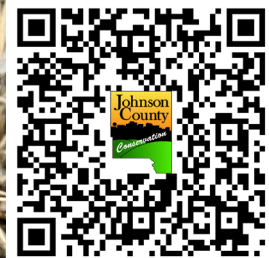
A Note from the Director

Larry Gullett - Executive Director



If you're anything like me many of you will "jump the gun" on getting outside after the winter season breaks. Every year, after being cooped up all winter, its common practice to overdo it during March in terms of getting outdoors. The geese and other birds migrating and singing are a great sign of things to come and help take the edge off spring fever. Then in April, everything breaks loose with flowers and plants emerging everywhere. Each spring we are reminded of all plants and animals we've missed all winter. It is so refreshing and comforting to know nature goes on, regardless of all the issues and day-to-day activities we all deal with.

The parks and public spaces are all here to enjoy and marvel in the miracles of life. Over the next several months get out and enjoy the celebration of life as this part of the earth warms. Whether you enjoy cycling the trails, walking at Cedar River Crossing and Cangleska Wakan, or fishing at Kent Park, there many things to do throughout the county. If you want a guided tour, attend the dedication of the new conservation area (Phebe Timber) this April (Information about the event is located on page 17). To download maps and addresses of public areas managed by the Conservation Board, scan the QR code below.



Above: If you find one of these in Johnson County please let me know by emailing me a photo at lgullett@johnsoncountyiowa.gov. Pasque flowers are one of the most coveted spring ephemerals. They flower close to Easter each year. I have been looking for one in Johnson County for the past nine years and have yet to find a one in the wild! They are only found in unplowed native prairie areas.

An Update on Repairs and Clean-up from Derecho

Larry Gullet - Executive Director

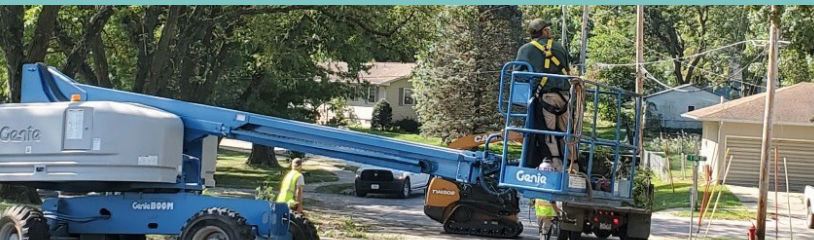
Almost 20 months have passed since the derecho of August 10, 2020. The impact on forests and trees in Johnson County was profound and the conservation department is still cleaning up from the storm. We have focused our clean-up on removal of downed and leaning trees in high use recreation areas and recreation areas hit hard by the storm. In addition to the storm's effect on trees, several structures within the conservation areas were damaged. At Cangleska Wakan, a lean-to used for storage was replaced and we still have plans to repair/replace a high-tunnel-greenhouse this spring. Other structures that needed repair included many of the roofs and shingles on buildings at Kent Park. In isolated natural resource areas, where they do not pose danger to the public, trees have been left where they fell during the storm, making it difficult to walk in some areas.



Downed logs and other debris on the Hoover Trail.



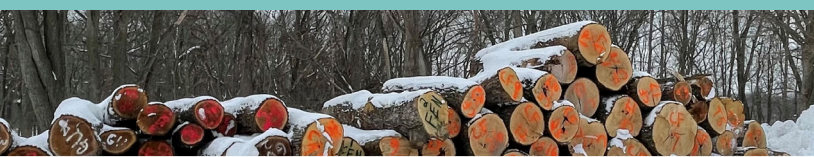
Downed trees and limbs at the Kent Park Campground.



JCC staff assisted with clean up in several surrounding communities.



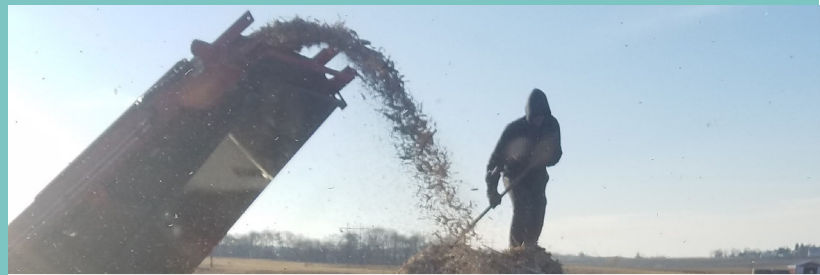
Clean up of large fallen trees at Cedar River Crossing.



Walnut, cherry, oak, and hickory logs from the storm.

Effects of Derecho on JCC Parks in Numbers

- 76,895 cubic yards of tree material processed - 113 semi-loads of mulch produced
- 98 prime saw logs of white, red, black and bur oak, hickory, walnut, elm, black cherry, white ash and river birch were transported to the sawmill at Cangleska Wakan for reuse in wood products
- 58 hazardous leaning trees were removed
- 128 hanging limbs removed by lifts and tree climbers
- 166 stumps greater than 24" in diameter and hundreds of smaller stumps were planed flush with the ground
- \$1.6 million in clean-up costs



113 semi-loads were filled with mulch from trees destroyed in the storm.

Exciting Updates to the Kent Park Campground

Continued from page 1



Corner view of the shower-house/restroom to be constructed at the entrance of the Kent Park Campground and adjacent to the Youth Group Camp. The facility will provide 12 single user restroom-showers.

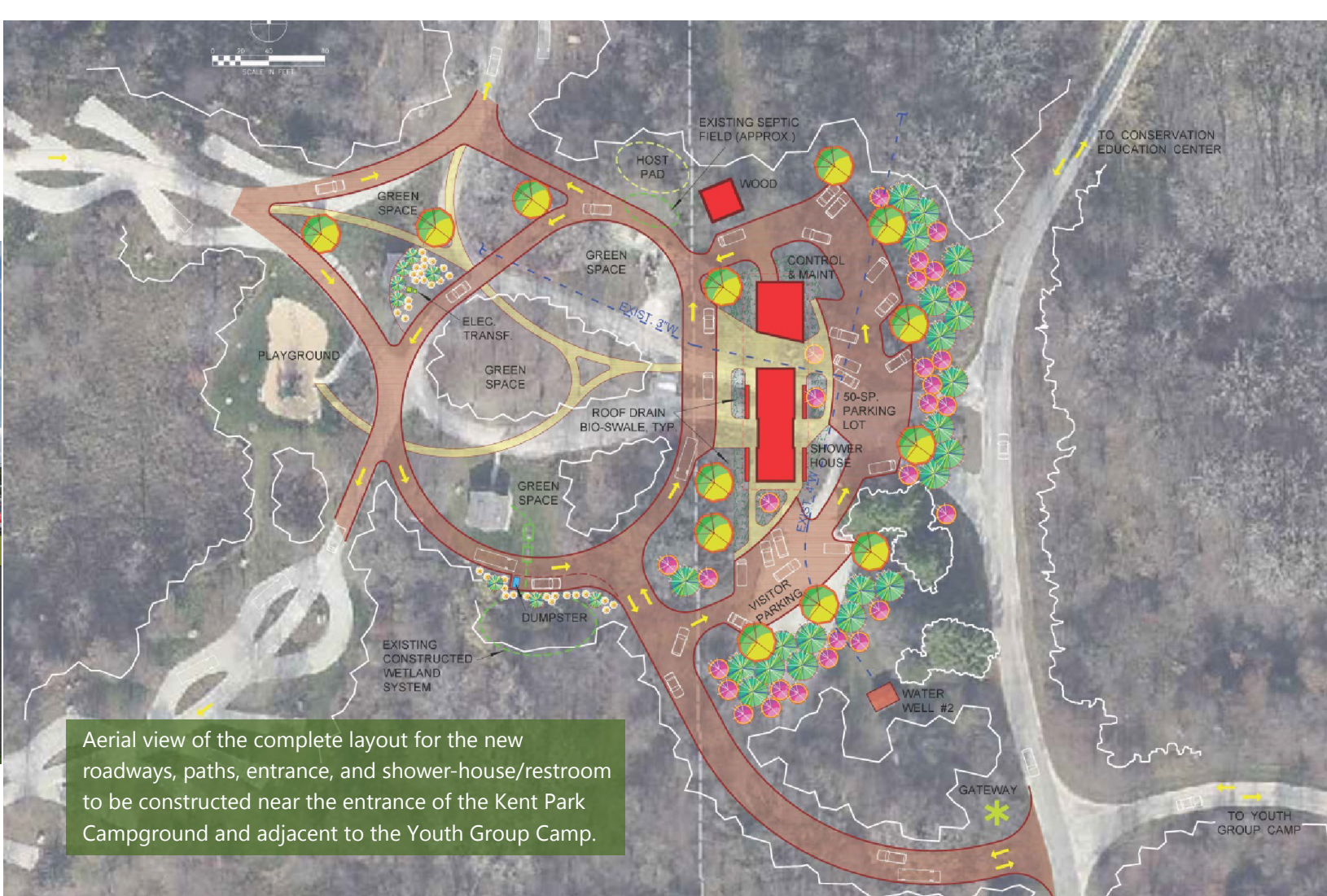
quality to the campground and associated dump station wastewater systems. These water quality results necessitated action to make the planned updates sooner rather than later, ensuring clean and safe water for public use.

After being in the planning stage for eight years, we are excited to share the new facility

plans with the public. The prior facility provided only two showers and toilets divided by gender. The updated facility will provide 12 single user shower-restrooms meaning anyone can use them regardless of gender identity or expression. At this time we are unsure if construction will result in periodic closures for the campground during the 2022 season.



Side view of the shower-house/restroom to be constructed at the entrance of the Kent Park Campground and adjacent to the Youth Group Camp. The facility will provide 12 single user restroom-showers.

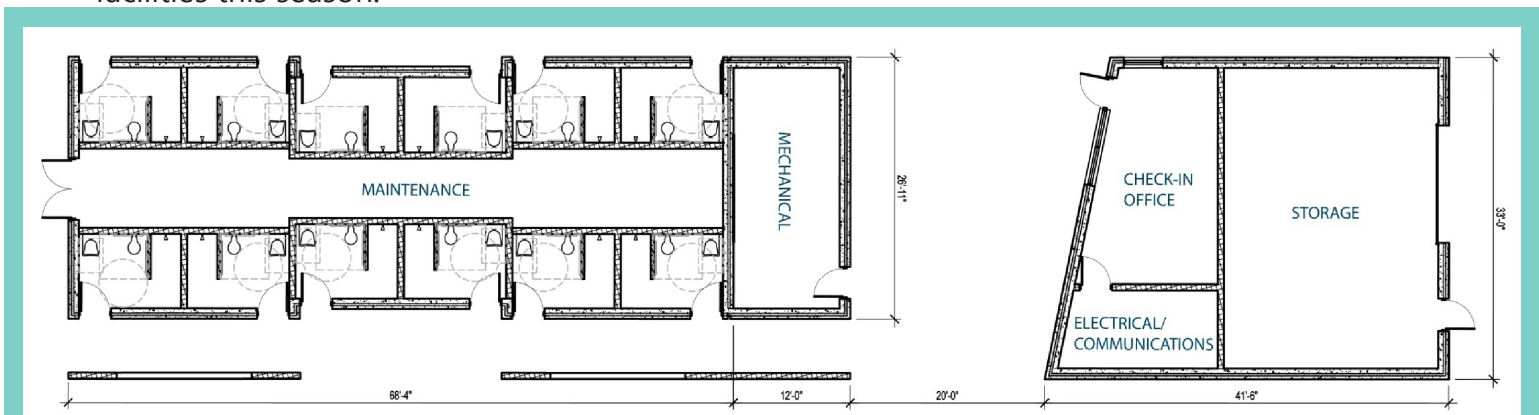


Aerial view of the complete layout for the new roadways, paths, entrance, and shower-house/restroom to be constructed near the entrance of the Kent Park Campground and adjacent to the Youth Group Camp.

We will likely know more about the timeline of construction activities in May 2022.

At this point we expect the campground to be open at the usual time this spring, around April 15th, and to stay open through the month of May. Campers should plan to have no access to water and modern restrooms or showers facilities this season.

There are primitive latrines throughout the campground and those will remain open. Our intent is to keep the campground open as much as possible during construction but there will be times when the campground needs to be closed for safety reasons. Please check our Facebook page routinely for any updates or call our office at 319-645-2315.



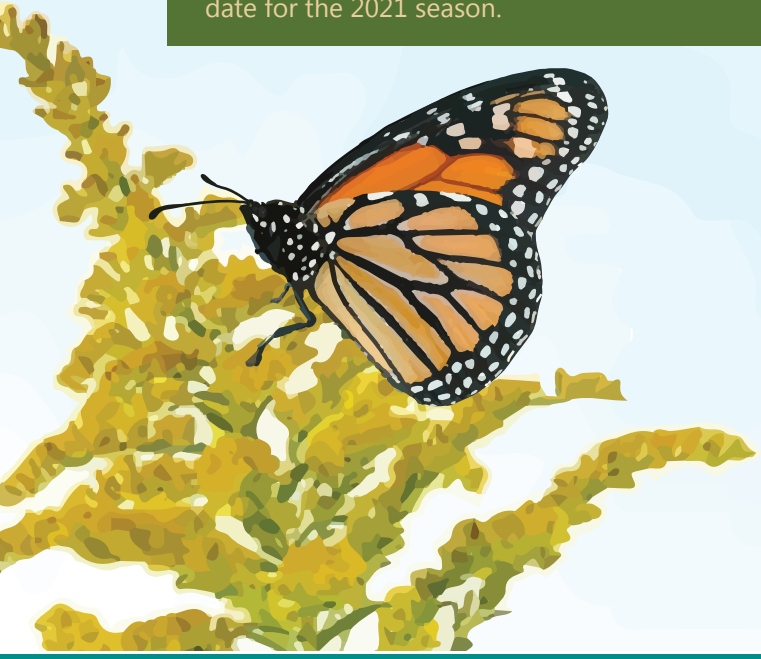
Concept schematic of the shower-house/restroom to be constructed at the entrance of the Kent Park Campground and adjacent to the Youth Group Camp. The facility will provide 12 single user restroom-showers.

Watching for Monarchs

Frances Owen - Naturalist

For the last two summers, Johnson County Conservation has been participating in the Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program (IMMP) organized by Monarch Joint Venture. This nationwide citizen science program seeks to collect data about milkweed, nectar sources, and monarch presence over a variety of different landscapes. This data is used to inform our understanding of monarch habitat, track conservation efforts, and monitor how habitat and monarch populations change over time. We meet most Wednesdays from the end of May through the first week of October and we want you to come help! Check out the next page to see how you can get involved.

Top photo on right: In June 2020, we waded through floodwater to reach the study site.
Second photo from top: We see diverse wildlife while at the site, like this a praying mantis we discovered in July 2020.
Third photo from top: In May 2021, our seasonal naturalist makes her way through six foot tall reed canary grass as we leave the study site.
Bottom photo: A peaceful October morning view from the study site on the last monitoring date for the 2021 season.



Volunteer with us!

Check out the list below for some of the ways you can get involved with the IMMP. If you have questions, you can send an email to: fowen@johnsoncountyconservation.gov

You can sign up for scheduled monarch monitoring events by scanning this QR code.



Data Entry

Even if you can't make it out to the study site with us, you can help us upload our data to the Monarch Joint Venture database!

Milkweed and Blooming Plant Survey

No experience identifying plants necessary! We will learn together to identify all of the flowering plants we encounter. This is usually the first Wednesday of every month.

Monarch Egg and Larva Survey

Search the milkweed plants on-site to find monarch eggs, caterpillars, and chrysalids! It's like a massive scavenger hunt and bragging rights go to whoever finds the most. We try to complete this every Wednesday.

Adult Monarch Survey

This survey looks for adult monarch butterflies only. It is the shortest of all the monitoring activities and takes place once or twice per month as the weather allows.

Tracking Parasitism and Monarch Survival

This activity requires volunteers to care for caterpillars and track their development from caterpillars (collected from the study site) to an adult monarch butterfly. Experience raising monarch caterpillars is recommended but not required. This requires daily involvement to care for the growing caterpillars.

Can you spot seven stages of the monarch butterfly lifecycle on the common milkweed plant to the right?

Hint Mom often places the first stage on the underside of a milkweed leaf.



MONARCH
JOINT VENTURE



Clear Creek Trail Extension to F.W. Kent Park

Brad Freidhof - Conservation Program Manager

We haven't provided a trails update since the spring 2021 edition of the Conservation Connection, so let's catch everyone up on what's been happening with the Clear Creek Trail Extension to F.W. Kent Park.

In spring 2021, the engineering and design team was just beginning to collect field data, complete survey work, and conduct some preliminary route analysis. The team was able to gather some important information during

these studies. Consultants made numerous visits to the trail corridor to study the local flora and fauna. Although they did not locate any threatened or endangered species, they were able to delineate wetlands that would be impacted by the trail route and inventory the plant communities in the trail corridor. The archaeological studies in the trail corridor discovered sites that are unique and historically significant.



Because we do not want to negatively impact the historically significant sites, we have identified an alternative route, and are studying the impacts and costs of both options. Studying the impact of the trail on natural and cultural resources is important and we plan to take our time, be thorough, and then move forward with the trail in the best possible location to protect the environment. This process will delay the project for a year. Costs associated with the study, engineering, and construction of the alternative route or excavation of the sensitive historical features will add about \$1.6 million to the project budget.

The connection of Kent Park to the Iowa City metro area trails system is important for several reasons, including the fact the trail will serve as a future connection to the community of Oxford and on west to the Amana Colonies. Trail options are currently being studied by the trail advisory planning committee, which consists of Johnson County Conservation Board Members, Conservation staff, representatives from Stanley Consultants, representatives from Johnson County Secondary Roads, representatives from Iowa Interstate Railroad, and representatives from the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT). A public open house was also conducted at F.W. Kent Park to allow adjacent landowners and members of the public to ask questions and provide comments. This input will be shared with the Iowa DOT for their input prior to the Conservation Board making a final decision regarding the trail route.

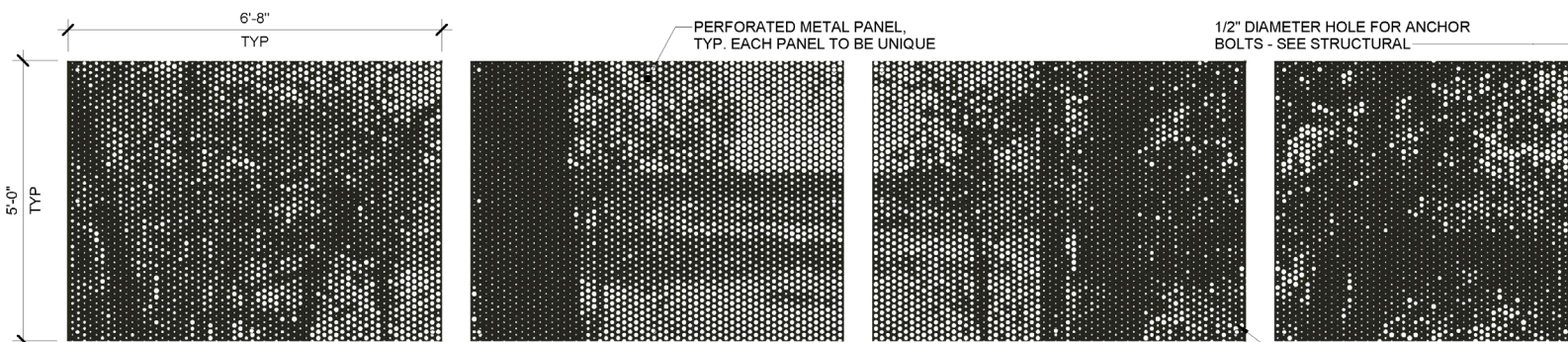
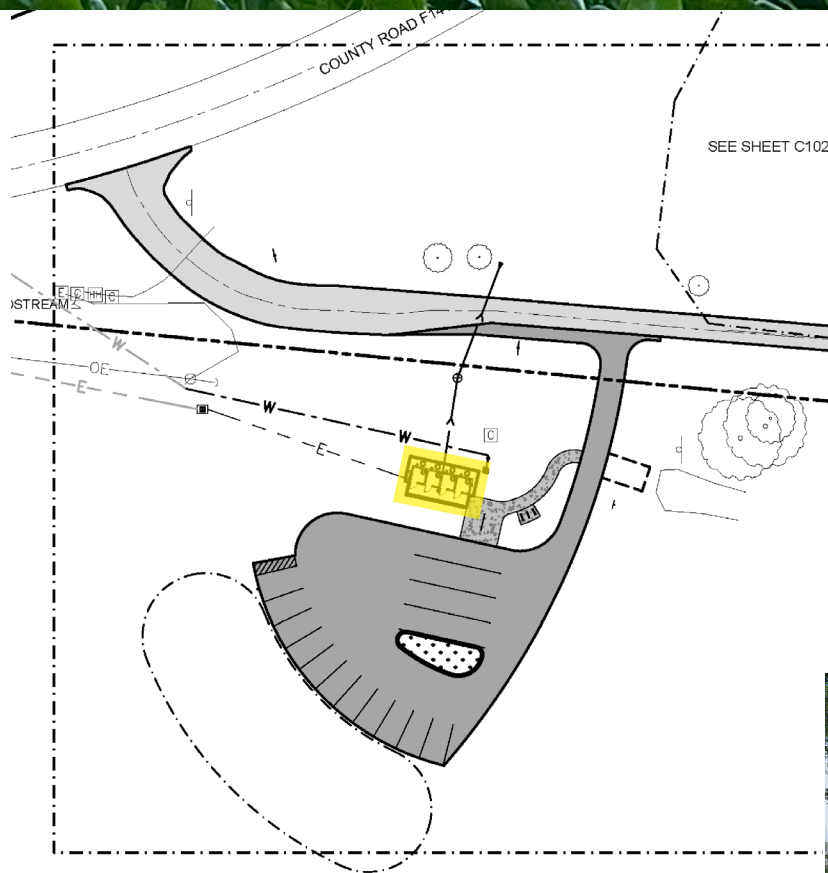
“If there’s one essential ingredient to creating trails and trail systems, it’s people. All the land and financing in the world won’t blaze a trail if there aren’t people championing the project.” - Bay Area Ridge Trail Council



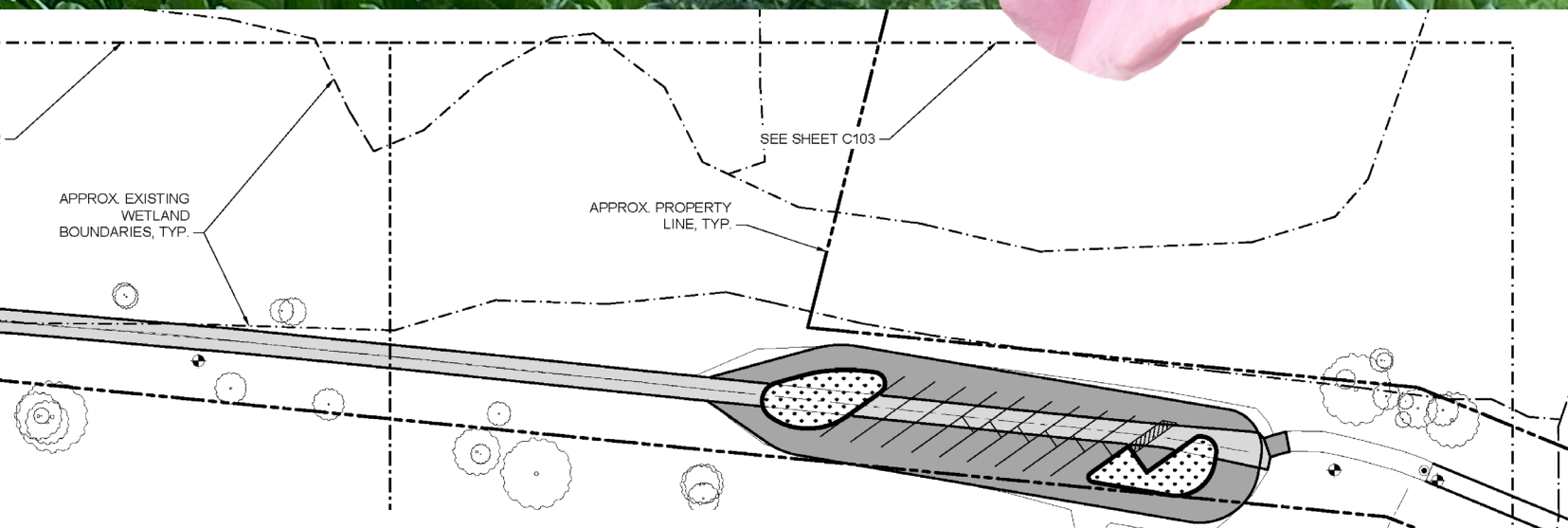
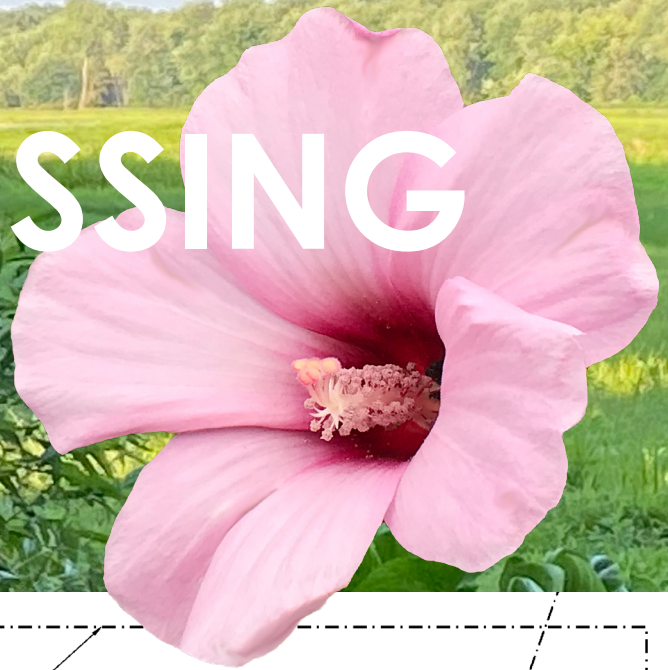
UPDATES FOR CEDA

Larry Gullett - Executive Director

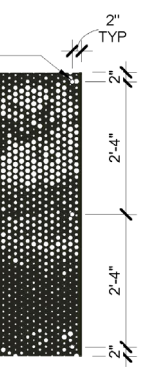
This spring, construction will begin on hard surfacing the roadway, development of parking areas, and construction of a latrine-restroom facility near the west side of the historic Sutliff Bridge. The project has been in the planning stages for about seven years and, with completion of the wetland restoration and Sutliff Operations Center, the project will now become reality. The access improvements will help relieve congestion from limited parking on the east side of the Sutliff Bridge and also provide park users at Cedar River Crossing with some long awaited restrooms and improved parking. The project is expected to be completed around December 1, 2022. Landscaping and seeding will be completed as a dormant seeding next fall. A big thank you to the Board of Supervisors for funding this project.



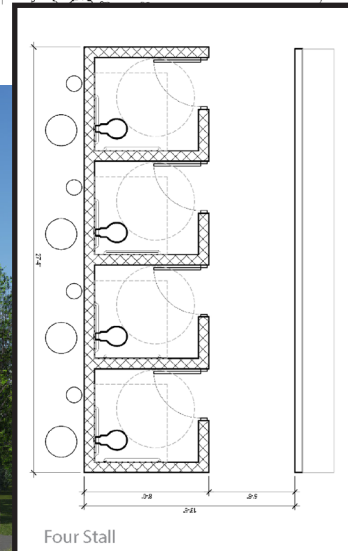
R RIVER CROSSING



Parking lot and restroom layout: Each of the two parking lots will include several traditional parking and busing spaces. Each lot will have an ADA van parking spaces.



Exterior privacy screen designed with imagery of the area



View from of the new facilities from the parking lot of Cedar River Crossing's north entrance. Plans include a total of four single user restrooms.

Spring Nature Journaling Challenge

Looking for adventure and more time outside this spring? You can get more meaningful time in fresh air by tackling some or all of these nature journaling challenges! Bring a journal along for the adventure, and try to combine sketches, words/descriptions, and quantitative measurements. Participants who complete 4 of the 8 challenges can submit a photo of the journal entries to **jccnaturalists@gmail.com** to receive a nature patch. Additionally, anyone needing special accommodations to complete this challenge can email the above address.

- Visit a forest and spend at least five minutes in silence focusing all of your attention on the sounds around you. Make a list of what sounds you hear, or try making a sound map. Spring is the best time to hear the songs of songbirds, as they are busy singing their spring mating songs. **JCC Park Recommendation:** Cangleska Wakan or Frytown Conservation Area.
- Hike to a wetland or pond and spend time listening to the frogs singing their mating calls. In your journal, try to describe the frog songs sound. If possible, visit again a few weeks later to see if the songs are different. **JCC Park Recommendation:** Ciha Fen Preserve, Cedar River Crossing, Sutliff Bridge, Kent Park, or Cangleska Wakan.
- Go on a mushroom hunt! Look for different species of mushrooms and sketch at least two different kinds that you find. **JCC Park Recommendation:** Cangleska Wakan or Frytown Conservation Area.
- Watch the sunset and sketch how it looks in your journal. **JCC Park Recommendation:** Cedar River Crossing (at the Astronomical Clock) or Kent Park (at Knight Prairie Pavilion)
- Visit the Bird Blind in Kent Park and count how many different species of birds you see. Include a sketch of at least one of the birds.
- Choose a tree with low branches that you can monitor daily. Watch for the buds to burst with spring growth. Once the buds burst, visit this tree every day for a week to observe the changes. Include a sketch each day and include measurements of new growth.
- Take a spring wildflower hike and try to find at least three species of flower to journal about. *(See the following page for JCC Park Recommendations)*
- Go to a wetland to catch, observe, and release tadpoles or look for tadpole eggs. Try to identify the species of tadpoles you find. **JCC Park Recommendation:** Kent Park or Cangleska Wakan.



Williams Prairie: Head to Williams Prairie in the last half of April to spot Marsh Marigold. Wear rubber boots and be prepared for wet and muddy conditions!



Ciha Fen Preserve: Take an April hike at Ciha Fen to enjoy Cleft Phlox (above) and Lanced-leaf Violet (left) and Fringed Puccoon (late spring to early summer).

Spring Ephemeral Tour

Visit these JCC areas to enjoy spring wildflowers (often called "spring ephemerals"). You can download the Spring Ephemeral Tour Guide, complete with maps of where to find the hotspots in each of these conservation areas, at:

<https://linktr.ee/johnsoncountyconservation>



Cedar River Crossing: Vibrant bluebells carpet the savanna floor from late April to early May. Other species like phlox, violets, and Wild Columbine dot the area as well.



Cangleska Wakan: Many spring wildflowers thrive here, but Spring Beauty especially shines. In late April's peak bloom, the forest floor looks dusted in snow from the blossoms.



Clear Creek Trail: This floodplain forest has many species to enjoy including Trout Lily (above), Rue Anemone (right), Toothwort, Springcress, Yellow Violet, and Bluebells.



Kent Park: From early to mid May, come to enjoy the abundance of the restored Shooting Star population around the Conservation Education Center.

Non-JCC areas for spring ephemerals include: Reyerson's Woods, Hickory Hill, Rochester Cemetary, Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Macbride Nature Recreation Area, Sugar Bottom, and the Clear Creek Trail in Coralville.

NEW ROOFS FOR THE



ROUND BARN

Seth Somerville - Field Worker

The Celebration Barn's roof was damaged during the 2020 derecho. The extremely high winds lifted many of the old metal shingles, compromising the integrity of the roof. Additionally, the three smaller round barns, set farther back on the property, lost many cedar shake shingles. Roofers began repairs on the smaller barns by power washing moss and lichen off the cedar shingles that had spent many of the last 20 years in the shade. Following the pressure washing, it was quite the process to see the roofers build a new exoskeleton of sorts on top of the now cleaned cedar shingles. Once the woodworking portion of the roofing was done, roofers started installing a stone coated metal roof. Many of the visitors to Cangleska Wakan during 2021 may have heard the sound of cutting metal, nail guns, hammers, and measurements being hollered back and forth from the roof to the ground. The roofers saved the steepest roof for last, requiring a fair amount of help from a lift to navigate the steep slopes of the "carpenters barn".

With the three round barns completed, the roofers began working on the larger Celebration Barn roof. JCC planned the biggest roofing project last in order to make sure no scheduled weddings or events planned for the 2021 season would have to be canceled. In the spirit of conservation, the roofers carefully removed the old metal roof so it could be reused for future projects. What couldn't be used was taken to the local scrap yard and melted down, giving each piece a new life. The roofers lucked out with regards to the weather as cold temperatures held off until the final week of work.



THE IDAHO WILDERNESS TREK IS BACK!

JULY 7 - 16
2022

Johnson County Conservation naturalists lead high school students on a immersive 10-day backpacking trip to Idaho's Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Students will participate in stewardship projects, experience wilderness and the ecology of the area, and gain valuable outdoor skills.

ARE YOU READY FOR ADVENTURE?

- 1 Email kmorrow@johnsoncountyiowa.gov for your application today! The application and letter of support are due Friday, April 15th.
- 2 Learn more about the trip! Attend the parent/student informational meeting at 5:30 pm on March 22th at the Conservation Education Center in F.W. Kent Park.
- 3 Final application selections will occur in early May.



HELP MAKE THIS TRIP A REALITY FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS!

Donate your gently-used outdoor/backpacking clothing, such as lightweight hiking pants, fleece jackets, rain jackets/pants, long-sleeve lightweight button-up shirts, and hiking boots. These items will add to our stash of backpacking clothing we are able to loan out to students for the Trek. The cost of these personal gear items can add up quickly, and every item we can loan helps to make this trip possible for more students.

You can also donate directly to our Wilderness Trek Scholarship Fund. Contact kmorrow@johnsoncountyiowa.gov for more information on how you can help.

PHEBE TIMBER DEDICATION

Celebrate the past and present of Johnson County Conservation's new public use area!
Saturday, April 30th from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

4492 Kansas Ave SW Iowa City, IA 52240

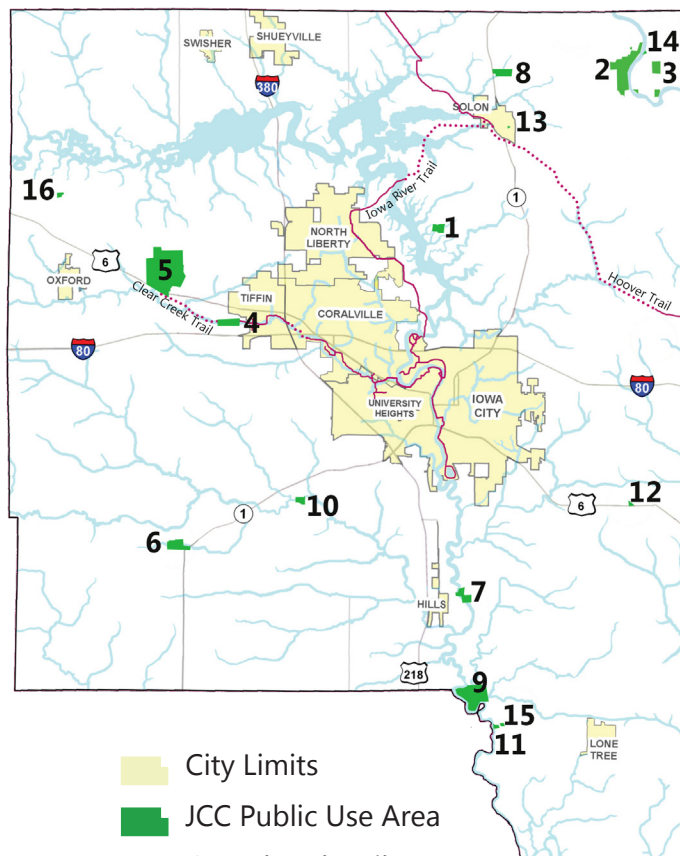
Parking is limited - carpooling is appreciated.

Scan QR code for more details, to register, and to receive updates on the event.



JCCB Public Use Areas

1. Cangleska Wakan	132 acres
2. Cedar River Crossing	560 acres
3. Ciha Fen Preserve	81 acres
4. Clear Creek Conservation Area	87 acres
5. F.W. Kent Park	1,062 acres
6. Frytown Conservation Area	94 acres
7. Hills Access	40 acres
8. Malinda Reif Reilly Fen & Prairie	100 acres
9. Pechman Creek Delta	380 acres
10. Phebe Timber	27 acre
11. River Junction Access	12 acres
12. Scott Church Park	5 acres
13. Solon Prairie	3 acres
14. Sutliff Bridge & Access	1/2 acre
15. Walker Park	3 acres
16. Williams Prairie Preserve	21 acres



- City Limits
- JCC Public Use Area
- Completed Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Rivers

Paved Trail Segments Managed by JCC

Clear Creek Trail	1.3 miles
Hoover Trail	6 miles
Iowa River Trail	3.5 miles

More information about JCC public use areas can be found through our website:

www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation

Program/Event Guide

How to Sign Up:

Programs are free unless a fee is listed. Sign up for all programs is online at the link below, unless stated otherwise.

Sign up at <https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation/events> or by scanning the QR code to the right. For questions or sign-up help, call **319-645-1011**.



Program/Event Accessibility

Do you require any specific accessibility measures in order to comfortably participate in these programs? Reach out to us at 319-645-1011 for assistance.

April

Woodworking for Wildlife: Solitary Bee Hotels

Friday, April 15, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Cangleska Wakan

Fee: \$20

Did you know there are around 400 different species of solitary bees in Iowa? Come learn about how you can protect our native pollinators and build an observation bee hotel to take home. Along with the bee hotel, participants can take home some native seed to enhance their backyard habitat.

Spring Ephemeral Hike

Friday, April 22, 4:00 p.m.

Cangleska Wakan

Join a naturalist to hike through a forest filled with wildflowers. Along the way, hikers will learn about the species in bloom. Hikers can choose between a one mile loop or a three mile hike through Cangleska Wakan and Big Grove Preserve.

Reptile Program & Book Drive Launch

Saturday, April 30, 10:00 a.m.

Sidekick Coffee & Books, Iowa City

Celebrate Independent Bookstore Day *and* Earth Month, while helping to support a local bookstore and the Johnson County Conservation education program! This program kicks off a book drive to help JCC grow our stock of children's nature books, which are used during free educational programs and for browsing during free visitor hours at the Conservation Education Center. During the program, a naturalist will be sharing live reptiles and reading a story. The event will take place outside, in the natural playground nearby. After the program, head into Sidekick Coffee & Books for a treat and a book, and consider buying one for JCC too! We'll have a wish-list available with the books we'd love to add to our collection. You can also support us by ordering online at: <https://sidekickonline.shopsettings.com/Bookshop-c55056773>. Select the Johnson County Conservation wish-list when shopping online. Thank you for supporting nature education!

Phebe Timber Dedication

Saturday, April 30, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Phebe Timber (4492 Kansas Ave SW, Iowa City, IA 52240)

Come to explore and celebrate one of the newest JCC properties! This family-friendly event includes a dedication and guided hike.

May

Spring Ephemeral Hike

Thursday, May 12, 4:00 PM
Cangleska Wakan

See event on April 22 for details.

June

Monarch Monitoring: Blooming Plant Survey and Egg & Larva Survey

Wednesdays, June 1 & 15, 7:30 a.m.
Cedar River Crossing

Come out with a JCC Naturalist to help gather data for the Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program (IMMP). A nationwide citizen science program that aims to document changes in monarch populations and habitat. No previous experience required! Contact fowen@johnsoncountyconservation.gov if you have any questions.

Great Bookmarks Challenge!

This spring, the Iowa Youth Writing Project (IYWP) will launch the Great Bookmarks Challenge! Kent Park is one of 14 featured locations throughout Iowa City and the surrounding area. This literary-themed scavenger hunt runs from April 8th through May 18th. For each hidden station found and "literary challenge" completed, participants will be entered into a raffle; prizes include a free night stay at the historic Highlander Hotel, a \$100 gift certificate to Basta, two main-stage tickets to The Riverside Theater, Raygun t-shirts, a FilmScene date night package, numerous generous prizes from Sidekick Coffee & Books, and many more. All ages will enjoy this program which encourages participants to hone their creative writing skills, explore new places, and get active. More info will be posted at the IYWP website soon: <https://iywp.org/>

Great Iowa River Race is Back!

Saturday, June 11, 10:00 a.m.
Sturgis Ferry Park, Iowa City

After a three year hiatus you'll want to save the date for the Great Iowa River Race! The race is open to both recreational and competitive paddlers and includes canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards. The course covers 9.25 miles of the Iowa River, starting at Sturgis Ferry Park and ending at Hills Campground. The entry fee is \$35 per person and includes a t-shirt and lunch. There is no day-of registration, and all registration closes June 8th. Rentals are available for \$10 while they last. To learn more and to register, scan the QR code below or visit: <https://paddleguru.com/races/GreatIowaRiverRace2022>.





Johnson County Conservation
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Oxford, IA 52332

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Spring Beauty, a lovely spring ephemeral, covers the forest floor in a thick, but momentary, blanket at Cangleska Wakan. Ephemeral means lasting for a very short time. The term is often used when referring to the brevity of clothing fashions. Thank goodness, similar to some fashions, these little flowers come back to see us time and time again.