



**Conserving and enhancing
Iowa's natural resources and
outdoor recreation.**

www.iowaswaterandlandlegacy.org

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Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

Iowa's Water and Land Legacy
P.O. Box 93176
Des Moines, IA 50393-3176

Mark Langgin
Campaign Manager
marklanggin@gmail.com
515-707-0266

Rosalyn Lehman
Campaign Field Director
rlehman@tnc.org
515-202-7720

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FACT SHEET: Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund

The Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund will provide a permanent, dedicated and accountable funding mechanism for protection of water quality, conservation of agricultural soils and improvement of natural areas in Iowa, including fish and wildlife habitat.

THE NEED – Iowa must invest properly in natural resources

- Our water quality is poor. DNR data shows 53% of waters rate 'poor'; EPA data shows 439 'impaired' waters in 2008
- We must conserve our fertile soils. Iowa loses an average of 5 tons of soil per acre each year due to erosion
- Wildlife habitat is scarce. Iowa ranks 49th of U.S. states in public lands; hundreds of Iowa's animals and plants are threatened or endangered
- Iowa's current conservation spending ranks us near the bottom – 47 out of 50 states

THE PLAN – Establishing the trust fund provides a permanent, reliable and accountable method for protecting vital natural resources.

- The trust fund is dedicated to water quality, soil conservation and other conservation and enhancement programs (see allocations on reverse of this page)
- The trust fund is permanent – a constitutionally-protected mechanism dedicated exclusively to natural resources
- The trust fund is accountable to Iowans through a public oversight committee, annual audits and performance reviews for the legislature
- This plan is the result of three years of research and legislative work
- Voters must approve the trust fund on Nov. 2, 2010

THE MONEY – Establishing the trust fund does not raise taxes

- The amendment on the ballot creates a dedicated, reliable mechanism for funding natural resources; it does not include a tax increase
- Trust Fund revenue will come from allocating 3/8 of one percent from sales tax revenue the *next* time the Iowa Legislature approves a sales tax increase.

CONSENSUS – Iowans support these goals

- 90% of Iowans say protecting land, water and recreational opportunities is critical to the state's economic vitality, and 75% support increased funding for those purposes
- More than 90% of Iowa's legislators voted "yes" twice to create the enabling legislation in 2008 and 2009
- Nationally, 75% of conservation measures have passed, most of which included new revenue; conservation funding measures passed recently in Minnesota, Missouri and Johnson County, Iowa

The measure will go to Iowans for a vote on Nov. 2, 2010.

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MORE

Trust Fund Allocations

The Sustainable Natural Resources Advisory Committee reviewed and researched current budgets and funding streams and concluded that an additional \$150 million per year, strategically used at state and local levels, would go a long way toward meeting Iowa's natural resources and recreation needs.

The following categories were identified by the Advisory Committee and supported by the Interim Legislative Committee. These represent increases to baseline funding to meet current needs. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources estimates that at least two thirds of the funding will be available to farmers and other private landowners for voluntary conservation incentives for clean water and soil conservation.

- **Agriculture and Land Stewardship.** \$30 million additional to meet the identified demand for the soil conservation and watershed protection programs the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship administers. This money would provide additional technical assistance to soil and water conservation districts, develop a stream bank and buffer stabilization project, initiate a state-funded CRP-type program to keep lands in hay and grass, and start a tillage management incentives program to assure adequate crop residue levels in areas impacted by demand for cellulosic ethanol production. This new money would also be used to support environmental agricultural and livestock stewardship.
- **Natural Resources Management.** \$35 million for identified needs in state parks, state preserves, wildlife areas, state forests, wildlife habitats, wildlife diversity program, access for hunting and other recreational activities, technical assistance from forestry, fisheries and wildlife biologists through private landowner programs and incentives, water trails, river and streams programs, natural resources outreach including natural history interpretation in the parks and natural areas, angling opportunities, conservation law enforcement, recreational safety programs, etc. The Department of Natural Resources is the state agency charged with conserving and enhancing Iowa's natural resources and providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities.
- **REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection).** \$20 million additional funds to meet the demands on REAP. The committee also recommends full funding of REAP to the authorized level. This would provide a total of \$40 million from current and future sources. This program provides funds for projects that enhance our natural, cultural, and recreational resources across all of the state.
- **Local Conservation Partnership Program.** \$20 million for habitat protection and conservation, infrastructure needs, conservation education, and nature interpretation at the local level. Dedicating these funds is part of a strategic effort to best address conservation needs in local communities. Funds would be made available to county conservation boards (\$12 million), nongovernmental organizations (\$5 million), and cities (\$3 million).
- **Watershed Protection.** \$20 million to improve and encourage a watershed approach to solving water quality environmental problems. Watershed protection includes encouragement of watershed groups, targeted projects, wetland restoration, and runoff filtration management techniques.
- **Lakes Restoration.** \$10 million additional for lake restoration needs. Iowans value water quality and desire safe, healthy lakes that provide a full complement of aesthetic, ecological, and recreational benefits. Local involvement and watershed protection are essential components of all successful lake restoration projects.
- **Trails.** \$15 million for the addition of new hiking, walking, biking, and water trails, and maintenance of existing trails. At this time, Iowa's trails are owned and managed by various entities such as county conservation boards, the state, cities, and non-profit organizations. These state investments in trails will be able to leverage additional federal, local and private funds.

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20100417/OPINION03/4170304/1035/Opinion/A-great-idea-on-paying-for-a-great-Iowa-outdoors>

A great idea on paying for a great Iowa outdoors

THE REGISTER'S EDITORIAL • APRIL 17, 2010

It's spring. It's the weekend. Get outside. Iowans and the outdoors go together. Maybe it's due to generations of working the land and sitting on front porches, but spending time in nature feels almost like a Midwest value. In fact, a 2006 state survey found about a million Iowans watch wildlife, especially birds. Hundreds of thousands of us use recreational trails, hunt small game, hike, fish, go ATVing, swim in natural waters and golf.

Yet, as important as being outside is to Iowans, this state has a smaller percentage of land set aside for public use than almost every other state. Federal records list more than 400 Iowa waterways as seriously polluted. Projects in state parks are uncompleted. Iowa loses nearly five tons of soil per acre each year due to erosion. Landmarks are crumbling.

This is what happens when Iowa ranks 47th on spending for recreation. It's what happens when Iowa has no dedicated, reliable source of funding for the outdoors, and lawmakers raid funds for trails and conservation whenever the budget is tight.

But there is hope.

In seven months, Iowans will have an opportunity put this state on a course toward a better future. Voters should support an amendment to the state Constitution to establish a fund to be used exclusively for recreation and conservation. It would provide a steady source of revenue for everything from cleaning up water to soil conservation to buying public land. This is not a vote to raise taxes, but it ensures that the next time lawmakers do raise sales tax, the first three-eighths of one percent will be dedicated to the outdoors.

Establishing such a fund has a broad coalition of supporters - from farmers to hunters to bicyclists. So many Iowans support the idea because so many would benefit. This isn't just something for tree huggers. In fact, in 2008 and 2009, more than 90 percent of state legislators voted in favor of putting the amendment to a public referendum. But on Nov. 2, Iowans need to take the next step and vote yes.

To be clear, this vote is only one step. Later, the Legislature will need to actually raise the state sales tax to provide money to the fund. Though never a politically popular proposal, it's especially unlikely in such difficult economic times and with so many lawmakers facing elections. But eventually it will need to be done. And the sooner the better.

Finally setting up a reliable source of revenue isn't just doing right by Mother Nature. It isn't just about giving Iowans places to ride bikes and catch fish. It's also about doing right by Iowa's economy. Recreation draws tourists, improves property values and makes Iowa a better place to live and work. A 2007 study from Iowa State University found four types of recreational amenities - lakes, state parks, county parks and trails - generate an estimated \$2.63 billion in spending each year. One recreational trail in southern Iowa adds \$600,000 to the surrounding area's economy.

A sustainable investment in the outdoors is a commitment to the future of Iowa. A commitment we should all make. In the upcoming months, this is the message Iowans should spread to their neighbors and friends - and whoever they meet when they're jogging in a park or hunting in a forest.

