



ANNUAL REPORT

O'BRIEN COUNTY
CONSERVATION BOARD

**2002-2003 Fiscal Year
Board Roster**

<u>Member</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Meetings Attended</u>	<u>Term Ends</u>
Jim Norton	Chairman	11	24 Jun 2008
Jack Wallinga	Vice-Chairman	9	24 Jun 2004
Dale Orthmann*	Member	8	
Laurence Haze	Member	9	24 Jun 2007
Frew Brown	Member	10	24 Jun 2006
Kathy Luedke*	Member	3	24 Jun 2005

*Dale Orthmann resigned in March 2003 and was replaced by Kathy Luedke who started in April 2003.

Permanent Staff

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Hiring Date</u>
Darwin Koenig	Director	1 Aug 1992
Terry Boltjes	Asst. Director/Park Ranger	1 Jan 1989
Richard Frerk	Park Ranger	1 Mar 1989
Charlene Elyea	Naturalist	1 Jul 2001

Seasonal Employees

Cal Pauling, Justin Smith, Ryan List, and Carmen Rohwer

Meetings Held

The Board held twelve regular meetings during the year. The Minutes of these meetings are on file at the O'Brien County Conservation Board Headquarters.

Land Acquisition

None.

Area Inventory

The O'Brien County Conservation Board manages 649 acres of land in 23 locations throughout the county for outdoor recreation and wildlife benefits. Of the 649 acres, 229 acres were purchased by the conservation board, 272 acres were donated to the conservation board, and 148 acres are leased by the conservation board.

Building Inventory

Eight areas have a total of 42 buildings/shelters to be maintained. There are 9 pit toilets, 1 flush toilet, 2 shower houses, 15 picnic shelters, a 40' x 86' shop/machine shed, a 32" x 48' equipment shed, a 26' x 52' office/garage, a 22' x 14' carpenter shop, 4 camping cabins, a concession stand, a lodge, and 5 miscellaneous buildings.

Major Equipment Inventory

2002 Ford F-150 4x4 pickup
1990 Ford F-250 4x4 pickup
1989 Chevrolet 1500 pickup
2003 Dodge Ram 2500 pickup
1997 Dodge Ram 1500 4x4 pickup
1980 Ford dump truck
John Deere 2150 4x4 tractor w/loader
Honda 4x4 ATV
John Deere F-925 grass mowers (2)
John Deere F-1435 grass mower
John Deere 4-row corn planter
John Deere 6' 3-pt tandem disk
John Deere 4-row cultivator
Bush Hog 6' rotary cutter

Work Completed By Area

Mill Creek State Park: 139 acres, leased from DNR.

Replaced/upgraded electrical system in south part of campground.

Drained silt pond to kill carp.

Repainted lifeguard shed.

Spread gravel on the roads in the campground.

Burned native grass areas.

Stocked catfish.

Regular maintenance such as mowing, tree trimming, repair of playground equipment, garbage collection, and trail repair.

Dog Creek Park: 110 acres, developed with 50% Federal funds.

Removed trees from prairie areas.

Stained camping cabins.

Tested water quality.

Burned prairie areas.

Mowed fire lanes.

Spread gravel on the park roads.

Stocked catfish.

Performed routine maintenance such as mowing, tree trimming, garbage collecting, weed control, and fence repair.

Douma Park: 21 acres, developed with 50% Federal funds.

Put white rock on camping pads.

Built new toilet.

Tested Water quality.

Stocked catfish.

Spread gravel on the park roads

Performed routine maintenance such as mowing, tree trimming, weed control, and garbage collecting.

Covey Church: 1 acre, leased from Grant Township.

Routine maintenance such as mowing and garbage collecting.

Bruegmann Area: 39.9 acres.

Routine maintenance such as mowing and weed control.

Tjossem Park: 19 acres, donated by Glenn Tjossem family.

Widened entrance drive.

Tested water quality.

Stocked catfish.

Spread gravel on park roads.

Performed routine maintenance such as mowing, garbage collecting, and weed control.

Old Dutch Fred Access: 1 acre.

Performed routine maintenance such as mowing and weed control.

Negus Wildlife Area: 17 acres.

Weed control.

Repaired fence.

Litka Wildlife Area: 4 acres, donated by Arnold Litka family.

Put up new area sign.

Routine maintenance such as mowing, garbage collecting, and weed control.

McCormack Prairie Area: 21 acres, donated by Francis McCormack.

Weed control.

Burned the prairie.

Weale Wildlife Area: 9 acres, donated by Mr. & Mrs. Evan Weale.

Weed control.

Burned the area.

Railroad Right-of-Way Habitat: 3 tracts, 18 acres, donated by O'Brien County Sportsmens Club.

Weed control.

Tree trimming.

Mill Creek Wildlife Area: 13 acres, donated by O'Brien County Sportsmens Club.

Weed control.

Flinders Wildlife Area: 3 acres, leased from James Flinders.

Weed control.

Muxlow Wildlife Area: 3 acres, leased from Merlin Timmons.

Weed control.

Hagen Wildlife Area: 11 acres, donated by Mr. & Mrs. B.C. Hagen.

Weed control.

Hickey Wildlife Area: 1 acre, leased from Francis Hickey.

Weed control.

Hannibal Waterman Wildlife Area: 160 acres, donated by O'Brien County Sportsmens Club and O'Brien County Historical Society.

Mowed fire lanes.

Planted food plots.

Weed control.

Repaired fence.

Mowed hiking trails.

Mowed and maintained pioneer cemetery.

Burned native grass areas.

Hill-Little Sioux Lookout Area: 1 acre, leased from Hill family

Garbage collection and weed control.

Burned Bridge Canoe Access Area: 1 acre, transferred from County

Weed control

Spread gravel on entrance drive.

Prairie Ridge Wildlife Area: 16 acres, transferred from County

Weed control

Environmental Education

The staff conducted a hunter safety class, held a youth fishing day workshop at Mill Creek State Park, and were instructors for the 6th grade outdoor classroom. In addition, 167 programs were presented to 6,566 adults and children by the naturalist. Four issues of the environmental education newsletter were published. Numerous environmental education articles were submitted for publication in the county's newspapers.

Coop Programs

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
--Catfish rearing/release program
--Lease of Mill Creek State Park

O'Brien County Natural Resource Conservation Service
--Annual outdoor classroom at Mill Creek Park

Paullina Lions Club
--lifeguards at Mill Creek State Park

Work Planned For The Upcoming Year

Seed old field areas with a mixture of native plants and plant food plots on the Hannibal Waterman Wildlife Area.

Burn prairie areas at Dog Creek Park, Mill Creek State Park, Mill Creek Wildlife Area, Weale Area, McCormack Area, Hannibal Waterman Wildlife Area, and Tjossem Park.

Add sand to the beach at Dog Creek, Mill Creek, and Douma Parks.

Routine maintenance such as grass mowing, weed control, garbage collecting, road maintenance, fence repair, and tree/brush removal.

Removal of old toilet at Mill Creek State Park.

Build new shower house/concession stand at Mill Creek Park.

Remove old carpenter shed at Mill Creek Park.

Create silt ponds in upper end of Dog Creek Park Lake.

New fence along west side of Dog Creek Park.

Bury rubbish from Innes building site.

Financial Report 2002-2003

Receipts

Camping	\$59,280
Mill Creek	43,930
Dog Creek	12,029
Douma	2,202
Tjossem	1,119
Showers	1,424
Lodge rental	990
Cabin rentals	7,425
Boat title fee	430
Miscellaneous	119
REAP	215
SEP (Special Environ. Programs)	0
Land Acquisition/Development (CLAF)	19,655 - <i>Swanson</i>
State reimbursement	0
Interest	1,701
 Total	 \$ 91,239

Administrative Expenditures

Salaries, full-time	125,499
Wages, seasonal	11,124
FICA	10,342
IPERS	9,971
Insurance, health	27,360
Office supplies	1,549
Magazines, books	10
Uniforms	806
Legal notices	219
Photocopying	6
Postage	671
Telephone	2,360
Education & Training	1,107
Medical Exams	276
Office Equip repairs	0
Workman's Compensation Ins	0
Dues & memberships	695
Office equipment & furniture	51
Mileage & expenses, Board members	205
Mileage & expenses, employees	642
 Total Administration	 192,893

Maintenance & Operation

Feed, fish & game	212
Custodial supplies	1,149
Hardware	1,363
Parts	2,999
Fuel & oil	4,899
Tires & tubes	860
Minor parts & accessories	716
Recreational upkeep	7,706
LP Gas	426
Electric	6,920
Water	1,005
Sanitation disposal/extermination	518
Trees & seeding	615
Deposit Reimbursements	835
Area development	13,706
Motor vehicle	21,630
Shop equipment	0
Misc.	470
Total Maintenance & Operation	66,029

Environmental Education

Magazines, Newspapers, Books	649
Minor equip & hand tools	407
Recreational upkeep	82
Audio/visual supplies	724
Internal projects	1,663

Total Environmental Education 3,525

Budgeted, Fiscal Year 2002-03	262,521
Expended	262,447
Balance, 30 Jun 2003	74

Recommendations, Needs, Future Plans

Natural Resource Inventories: Although the conservation/protection of the natural resources of the county is a primary function of the Board, in the 38 years that the Board has been in existence it has not undertaken any plant, animal, endangered species, or other natural resource inventory. Without such baseline data it is difficult, if not impossible, to properly plan for future actions (particularly land acquisition/protection and habitat improvement) or judge the effectiveness of our programs.

Conservation Revenue: As was done in June of 1996, monies received

by the Conservation Board should be credited to the conservation reserve fund as specified in Chapter 350.6, Code of Iowa. This money could be used for the proposed "Prairie Heritage Education Center" (both for construction and maintenance), or for other development as needed. It should be noted that conservation user fees are not mandated by the Code of Iowa. Fees were put in place by the Conservation Board to be put into the Conservation Reserve Fund for land acquisition and development projects (above and beyond the tax levy).

Land Acquisition: The Board needs to pursue a policy of land acquisition (or other form of land protection such as conservation easements) in the watersheds of the lakes at Mill Creek State Park and Dog Creek Park. The water quality of a lake is only as good as the quality of the watershed that feeds the lake. The best long-term protection for our lakes is to be able to control, or effectively influence, what happens in the watershed area.

The Board also needs to identify properties in the county that have significant value as wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, and/or historical or archaeological significance. Such properties should be purchased, or otherwise protected, whenever they come on the market.

Equipment Needs: We need to set up a schedule to upgrade our work vehicle fleet and other equipment to meet the demands of our growing program. Our tractor has a lot of hours on it and is showing its age. It should be traded for a newer tractor.

Building Needs: The lodge at Mill Creek State Park needs extensive repair work on the windows and back doors. We need to replace concession stand at Mill Creek State Park. We need to expand the shower facilities at Mill Creek State Park.

Park/Campground Needs: The roads in the Dog Creek Park and Mill Creek State Park campgrounds (especially the main road along the east edge at Mill Creek State Park) should be surfaced with asphalt, concrete, or a seal coat. This would improve the campground by reducing the amount of dust and mud.

There is a concern about the water quality in Dog Creek Lake. Long range plans need to be drawn up to manage the lake resource (in cooperation with DNR and NRCS). A silt dam and basin should be constructed at the west end of the lake to trap sediments. The lake may also need to be lowered/draind in order to remove excess silt accumulation.

Well Water: The wells at Dog Creek, Douma, and Tjossem will need to be tested regularly. We have had constant problems with high

nitrate and bacteria counts at Dog Creek and Douma Parks, especially at south Dog Creek. The DNR is proposing that all wells serving the public will be assessed annual fees. We have four wells that might be assessed fees if the DNR proposal is enforced.

Toilet: We should look into replacing the old toilet facility east of the lodge. If not replaced, the old toilet needs to be remodeled and made handicapped accessible. *TEAR-DOWN AFTER NEW CONSTRUCTION*

Mill Creek State Park dam and spillway: The joints in the spillway need to be recaulked and the water control valve on the dam needs to be repaired/replaced. Also, the boat ramp and swimming area need to be deepened. The lake would probably have to be drained to do this work.

4 Playground equipment: The ADA has submitted new rules to be acted upon regarding accessibility in public areas. None of the playgrounds/equipment in our county parks meet the proposed guidelines. Much of our playground equipment is approaching the point of needing to be replaced. We may have to take a hard look at whether it is cost-effective, from both monetary and liability aspects, to continue to provide playground equipment. Actually what we really need to ask ourselves is "what does playground equipment have to do with natural resource conservation?"

Prairie Heritage Center: Now that a site has been acquired, we need to move ahead with building plans and financing.

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