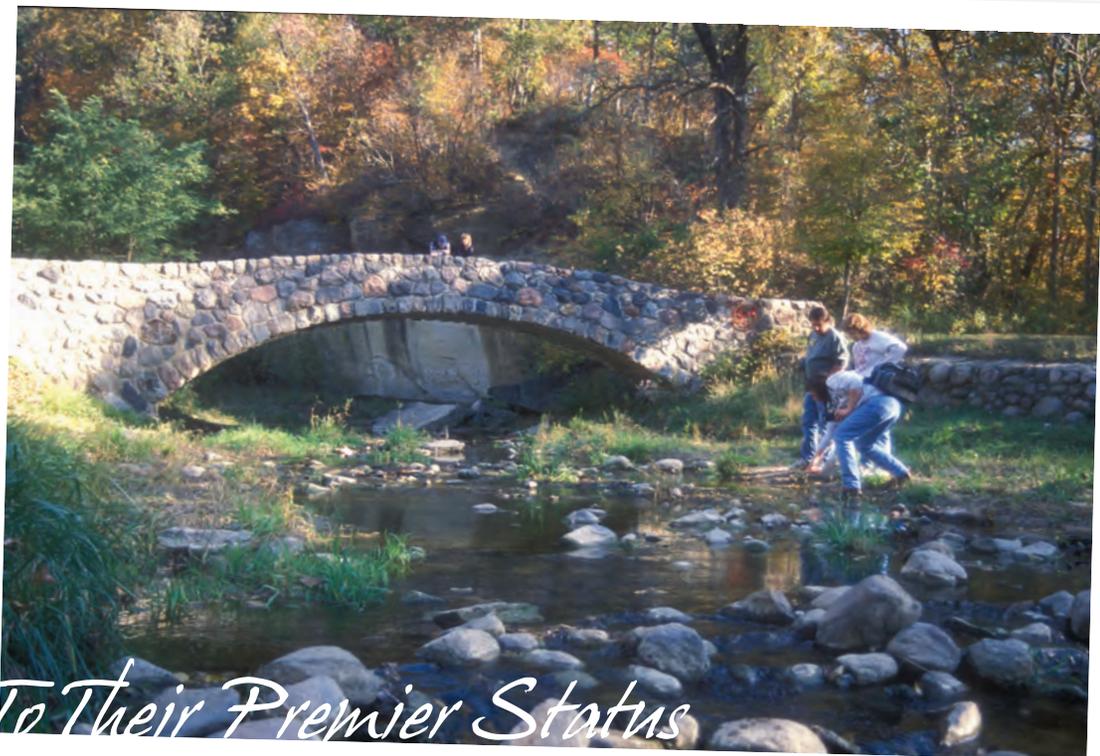




*Preserving
our heritage
for the next
100 years...*



Restoring Iowa State Parks to Their Premier Status



100 years of Iowa State Parks

Dr. Thomas H. Macbride, botany professor and a future president of the University of Iowa, identified the need for rural parks where people could experience "primeval nature." Parks would pursue multiple missions: resource conservation, promote public health and education by serving as outdoor labs.

After the 1916 National Park Act, Iowa was one of the first states to enact State Park legislation. The 1917 (Iowa) State Park Act authorized the new State Board of Conservation to investigate and select worthy lands for acquisition.

Americans began to look for places to recreate. With the invention of the automobile, an increasing number of urban residents traveled to the country for outdoor fun.

The greatest period of park expansion and facility development occurred in the depths of the Great Depression as a result of federal work programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The CCC and the WPA worked in 46 Iowa State Parks and built more than 1,000 structures. Most of the rustic stone and timber buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and represent the essence of the State Park system.

Post-war prosperity brought a dramatic increase in park attendance as State Parks assumed a more distinct identity as outdoor recreation areas. Camping gained popularity.

1895
1915
1917
1919

1920s

1930s

1940s

1950s

A momentum for State Parks built with a citizen-driven, loose coalition of members from the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs, Audubon Society, the State Horticultural Society and the Iowa Academy of Science.

Iowa's first state park, Backbone, was dedicated in 1920. The state continued to establish parks, each with its own natural uniqueness. By 1927, Iowa had 38 state parks.

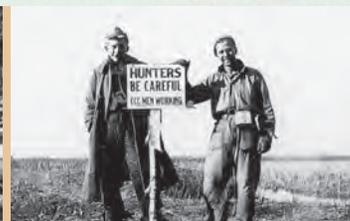
A naturalist program stationed resident naturalists in nine parks to educate visitors about natural and cultural features.

The Legislature allocated funds for the creation of new parks, such as Viking Lake, Rock Creek and Lake Anita, which featured artificial lakes.

The State Board of Conservation identified potential places for State Parks, such as Backbone and Maquoketa Caves.

Public ownership was first priority for the board. Picnicking and hiking were popular and facilities were mostly nonexistent.

World War II ended the New Deal relief and conservation programs. By now Iowa had 73 state parks and preserves—much higher than the national average 29 park units per state.





Parks suffered budget and staffing restrictions. Major facility development and improvement projects stalled due to lack of funds.

The prairies, savannas and forests that had been the basis for many State Parks suffered from lack of effective management. An effort emerged to develop ecological management plans but was eliminated in budget cuts.

Restore the Outdoors funding ended. A backlog remains of sewer, drinking water treatment and electrical systems that need to be replaced or upgraded for visitor safety and protection of environment and water quality.

Expansion continued. State recreation areas, such as Volga River, Pleasant Creek and Brushy Creek, offered year-round opportunities, hunting and 24-hour access that couldn't be found in most State Parks.

State Parks lost more than 20 full-time staff and many seasonal employees, reducing some parks to a single full-time staff member. As a result, park maintenance was at a basic subsistence level.

Iowans celebrated the 75th birthday of the State Park system 1995.

Concerned Iowans seek to create a statewide advocacy group like that which helped establish the State Park system. Their goal is to restore Iowa State Parks to their premier status and to continue building a legacy.

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s 2007 2020

Park visitation continued increasing until the energy crisis in the mid-70s caused people to stay home. Major capital improvement made Big Creek the state's newest major recreation area.

The State Park User Fee Program (1986-1989) proved to be unpopular but did generate some funding for renovation and replacement of existing facilities.

The 1989 Resource Enhancement and Protection Act (REAP) replaced the State Park User Fee Program to fund conservation, outdoor recreation and renovation programs. Not fully funded, REAP could not address growing facility maintenance needs.

The beautiful structures constructed by the CCC needed restoration and renovation as did park sewers, water systems and campground electrical systems.

The Restore the Outdoors Program (RTO) was established in 1997, allocating \$3 million annually to restore and renovate historic park facilities. Outstanding results allowed visitors to once again enjoy the buildings.

In response to visitor demand, an outdoor interpretation program has been reintroduced to connect people to State Parks.

Iowa State Parks will celebrate 100 years in premier condition thanks to dedicated and visionary people who developed a framework and strategy to enhance conditions for State Parks.

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Iowa State Parks in Numbers



Park System

- 56 state parks
- 12 recreation areas
- 60,000 acres (approx.)
- 23 County Conservation Board-managed state parks/rec areas
- 32 state park lakes
- 37 beaches
- 14,128,455 state park visits annually



Staff

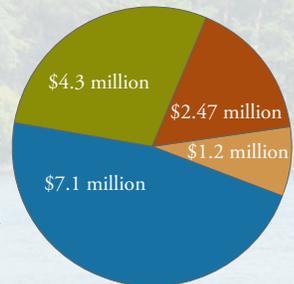
- 90 field staff
- 6 district supervisors
- 4 district office secretaries
- 4 central office management
- 186 seasonal staff

Sources of Funding



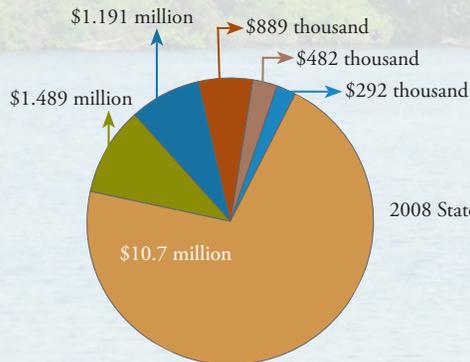
Annual State Park Capitals Program
Total: \$6.6 million

- REAP
- Health & Safety
- P&I Road Fund
- Marine Fuel Tax



2008 State Park Operations
Total: \$15.1 million

- General Fund
- Park Receipts
- Infrastructure Fund
- Federal Funds & Misc.



2008 State Parks Operations Expenditures
Total: \$6.6 million

- Staff Salaries
- Maintenance/ Utilities
- Vehicles/ Equipment
- Miscellaneous
- Outside Services
- SRF Loan Repayment



Structures

- 144 shelters
- 73 cabins
- 25 lodges
- 5 museums/nature centers

Camping

- 701,207 camping guest days
- 31,282 cabin guest days
- 5,154 campsites
- 3 group camps



Trails

- Hiking- 478 miles
- Equestrian- 164 miles
- Mountain Bike- 190 miles
- Cross Country- 407 miles
- Snowmobile- 307 miles