



DUBUQUE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
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Brian Preston, Director
Board Members:
George Davis
Mark Wagner
Jim Pfeiler
Stacy Conforti
Nick Callahan

MARCH 19, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

Dubuque County Conservation Board meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Mark Wagner at 1:30 P.M. In person meeting held at the Swiss Valley Nature Center with a Zoom link, <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81925919694?pwd=DcmFxtR1cf5kwrGymRYQXBg1aw7LO.1>
Meeting ID: 819 2591 9694 Passcode: 098022

ROLL CALL:

Board Members Present: Mark Wagner, Jim Pfeiler, and Nick Callahan. George Davis arrived at 1:40 P.M. and assumed chair of the meeting. Absent: Stacy Conforti.
Staff Members Present: Brian Preston, Nate Sisler, Ray Martin, Kaytlan Moeller, Jason Denlinger, Joe Simpson and Lisa Schroeder.

PUBLIC INPUT:

None

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Motion to approve the February 19, 2026 meeting minutes was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 3-0.

SPECIAL EVENT APPLICATION:

Preston gave an overview of the application received from Mississippi Valley Running Association (MVRA).

- May 2, 2026, starting at 7:00 A.M. and ending at 11:00 A.M.
- Location: Heritage Trail at the Heritage Pond parking lot.
- Estimated 300 participants, 150 vehicles, and 100 spectators.
- Race registrations go to scholarships for next year's race.
- Group has held similar event previously with no issues. Preston recommended approval of the special event application.

Motion to approve the special event application for Mississippi Valley Running Association on the Heritage Trail was made by Callahan and seconded by Pfeiler. Motion carried 3-0.

FISH HABITAT STAMP GRANT:

Preston presented Fish Habitat Agreement: 26-19F, Locher Lake Rock Mound and Shoreline Project.

- February 12, 2026, the Natural Resource Commission approved the Dubuque County Conservation application for Fish Habitat Stamp Fund.
- Cost-share agreement is not to exceed \$40,252.00.
- Estimated cost for the county is \$4,000.00.
- Project Completed by December 31, 2027.
- Placement of 12 rock piles and 935 feet of shoreline habitat and stabilization for fish habitat purposes, located on the NE side of Locher Lake.

Motion to approve Fish Habitat Agreement #26-19F, Locher Lake rock mound and shoreline project was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 3-0.

FENCING ALONG HERITAGE TRAIL:

Preston stated the county is 100% responsible for the fencing cost of sections along the Heritage Trail. This portion of fencing is along the Dale Leslein property to keep cattle off the trail. We requested three bids but only received two bids.

- Thoma Fencing for \$20,502.50.
- Hulscher Fencing Inc. for \$22,685.00.

Motion to award the fencing bid to Thoma Fencing for \$20,502.50 was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 3-0.

REMOVAL OF HAZARDOUS TREES AT NEW WINE:

Bids received for tree removal only; Conservation staff will take care of the cleanup:

- Cedar Birch Tree Service \$1,400.00.
- Douglas Timber Solutions \$1,000.00.
- Kluesner Forestry Services, LLC \$900.00.

Motion to award the bid for tree removal at New Wine to Kluesner Forestry Services, LLC, for \$900.00 was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 3-0.

FILLMORE FAIRWAYS CONCESSION AGREEMENT:

Preston revised the agreement based on the Treasurer's recommendations to require weekly ACH deposits, increased bond, point of sale reporting and 5% late penalty if weekly deposits are not made on time.

- Point of Sale review monthly and reconcile to tee sheet.
- Treasurer's Office will set up the ACH payment weekly.
- Discussion:
 - Annual memberships to be sold through the county office in the future.
 - Membership tracking list to be created and posted.
 - Goal to finalize membership structure by October.
 - Manage tracking of gift certificate sales.
 - Contract dates align with calendar year.

Motion to approve the Fillmore Fairways concession agreement with the caveat to provide a list of last year's annual memberships and monthly annual memberships going forward was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 4-0.

PUBLIC INPUT:

None.

STAFF REPORTS:

Staff members provided updates on various projects and activities.

DIRECTOR REPORT: Preston reported:

- Introduced Joe Simpson, new Park Ranger. Simpson shared a little about himself and his background.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR REPORT: Sisler reported:

- Chainsaw training was well received
- Trees pruned
- Shower buildings – put back together for upcoming camping season
- Supplies picked up for the Swiss Valley Campground Electrical upgrade
- Purple Martin House are up at Mud Lake, Finley's Landing and Proving Grounds

NATURALIST REPORT: Denlinger reported:

Program statistics for February:

- 39 programs, 1,428 participants
- Programs included: 1st grade Outdoor Adventures, career and sciences fairs, illuminate the night hike, maple syrup programs, Pre-K programs, teens take CAARE, scout programs and Iowa lost Lichens

- Upcoming programs: Skunk Cabbage Hikes, Teddy Roosevelt Program, Trivia Bee, Homeschool programming ongoing, Friends Pancake Breakfast, Woodcock Walk, school field trips and 4th grade Outdoor Adventures

No formal action was taken; reports were informational.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Motion to approve the March 2026 payables and February 2026 Procurement Cards was made by Callahan and seconded by Pfeiler. Motion carried 4-0.

WORK SESSION WITH RDG:

Ryan Peterson and Avi Clancy with RDg presented comprehensive visitation analysis using Placer AI, a location analytics platform utilizing anonymized mobile location data from apps that track user locations. The board engaged in extensive discussion about opportunities, challenges, and priorities for the next five years. RDg facilitated conversation around the 2020 Master Plan framework of Recreate, Protect, Educate, and Share, noting that recreation often serves as the gateway to conservation awareness, with education following as people become curious about the natural areas they visit. Locher Lake emerged as a high priority for new development opportunities for the next five years, representing significant potential for Western Dubuque County economic development in partnership with the City of Cascade. Board members emphasized the property's potential as a draw for visitors, like New Wine Park's relationship with Dyersville tourism. The 100-acre property (approximately 30 acres lake, 70 acres land) has use restrictions prohibiting campgrounds and hunting, with one year remaining on an agricultural contract.

- Online public survey for master plan update input.
- Display boards showing potential projects for each park property based on 2020 Master Plan years 6-10 recommendations and recent staff input.
- Four open houses for the public to give feedback.
- RDg to compile public input from open houses and online survey, analyze feedback, and develop prioritized recommendations for system-wide and park-specific improvements.

NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, April 16, 2026, at 4:00 P.M., Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Rd. Peosta, Iowa 52068.

ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 3:41 P.M.



DUBUQUE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBER



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