



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

APRIL 16, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

Dubuque County Conservation Board meeting was called to order by Chair George Davis at 4:03 P.M. In person meeting held at the Swiss Valley Nature Center with a Zoom link, <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89781258873?pwd=kowKi6raNFliADp86GVADbSR31VYNY.1>
Meeting ID: 897 8125 8873 Passcode: 154563

ROLL CALL:

Board Members Present: George Davis, Mark Wagner, Jim Pfeiler, Stacy Conforti and Nick Callahan.
Staff Members Present: Brian Preston, Nate Sisler, Kaytlan Moeller, Taylor Schaefer, Nick Banwarth and Lisa Schroeder. Absent: Ray Martin.

PUBLIC INPUT:

None

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Motion to approve the March 19, 2026 meeting minutes was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 5-0.

SPECIAL EVENT APPLICATIONS:

- Alzheimer's Association Fundraiser at Heritage Pond on August 15, 2026.
 - 350 participants, Start time 7:30 A.M., End time 11:00A.M.
 - 5K and half marathon run/walk event to raise funds for Alzheimer's Association.
 - Preston recommended approval. No issues in the past and this is approximately the 10th annual for this event.

Motion to approve the special event application for Alzheimer's Association Fundraiser at Heritage Pond was made by Wagner and seconded by Pfeiler. Motion carried 5-0.

- St. Vincent De Paul Fundraiser at Heritage Pond on September 26, 2026.
 - Approximately 150 participants, Start time 8:00 A.M., End time 12:30 P.M.
 - An annual run/walk/bike fundraiser for St. Vincent De Paul.
 - Preston recommended approval. No issues in the past and this is approximately the 3rd annual for this event.

Motion to approve the special event application for St. Vincent De Paul Fundraiser at Heritage Pond was made by Callahan and seconded by Conforti. Motion carried 5-0.

- Friends of Dubuque County Conservation Fundraiser at Swiss Valley Nature Preserve on October 3, 2026.
 - Approximately 150 participants, Start time 7:00 A.M., End time 4:00 P.M.
 - An annual 25 KM, 10.4 KM and 8.37 KM and 1 KM kids race/Trail Race.
 - Proceeds benefit the Friends of Dubuque County Conservation.
 - A shuttle will run from Swiss Valley Park to Swiss Valley Nature Center for parking.

- Preston recommended approval. No issues in the past and this is approximately the 10th annual for this event.

Motion to approve the special event application for Friends of Dubuque County Conservation at Swiss Valley Nature Preserve was made by Wagner and seconded by Conforti. Motion carried 5-0.

- Scouting America, Northeast Iowa Council event at Swiss Valley Park and Campgrounds on October 17, 2026.
 - Approximately 200 participants, Start time 12:00 P.M., End time 4:00 P.M.
 - Annual Cub Scout event for school youth to experience activities like BB guns, archery, hiking, and skill building.
 - Preston recommended approval. No issues in the past and this is approximately the 8th annual for this event.

Motion to approve the special event application for Scouting America, Northeast Iowa Council at Swiss Valley Park and Campground was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 5-0.

AWARD BID FOR TREE VENDOR PURCHASE:

Preston introduced the grant we received from Dubuque Metropolitan Area Waste Agency (DMASWA). A tree giveaway funded by a \$25,000.00 grant over 3 years. We will need to amend the budget to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors.

Moeller explained participants would pre-select trees in June and pick up that fall, approximately 250 trees per year that are native and pollinator friendly species in 5-gallon pots will be distributed.

Moeller contacted several tree nurseries and received only three quotes.

- Hoette Farms Nursery \$580.00 – Trees smaller than would like and not able to provide all the species.
- Johnson's Nursery \$859.00 – Trees would be too large.
- Forrest Keeling Nursery \$253.50 – Meets size and species requirements.

Motion to approve Forrest Keeling Nursery as the vendor for tree purchasing was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Conforti. Motion carried 5-0.

PERMISSION TO SOLICIT BIDS FOR A TIMBER HARVEST AT NEW WINE AND WHITEWATER CANYON:

Discussion of two timber harvest projects as part of the Iowa Forest Resiliency Partnership Program grant which also funds invasive species control, site prep and replanting of over 20,000 trees in multiple sites.

- Natural Resource Commission approved the grant, private contractors will perform the work and timber revenue will help meet the required match.
- Forester Alex Hoffman with the DNR will mark the trees for harvest. White Oak is a keystone species. Oak Hickory forest is shade intolerant and being lost at 45,000 acres/year in Iowa due to competition from shade tolerant invasives.
- New Wine Park: approximately 4 acres with 131 sellable trees.
- Whitewater Canyon: Stand 19/20; 19 acres; 457 sellable trees.
- Bids due May 20, 2026, at 1:00 P.M. at the Swiss Valley Nature Center, public bid opening and results presented at the May 21, 2026 Board Meeting.

Motion to approve soliciting bids for a timber harvest at New Wine Park and Whitewater Canyon was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Callahan. Motion carried 5-0.

IOWA CLIMBERS' COALITION:

Iowa Climbers Coalition (ICC), Jake DeGroat President, Jake DeVolder Vice President, Will Giegerich Secretary, Kierra DeVolder Member of Board of Directors were present. DeVolder described the rapid growth of rock climbing across the U.S.

- Upcoming 2028 Olympics – rock climbing
- Speed climbing, sport climbing and bouldering options – Iowa primary features sport climbing and bouldering.

- ICC's role – 20 year volunteer nonprofit; activities include route development, maintenance, annual hardware inspections, biannual trail days; stewardship in the core mission.
- Whitewater Canyon identified as a potential rock-climbing area.
- ICC handles funding, management plans, and bolting plans while working closely with land managers on sensitive areas.
- Board members asked about the ICC's relationship with Jones County, John Klein at Pictured Rock County Park and ICC confirmed a long-standing positive working relationship.
- Preston noted that rock climbing was listed in the long-range plan. ICAP (Iowa Communities Assurance Pool), insurance for Dubuque County, would need to review and confirm areas.

No formal action was taken; discussion was informational.

PUBLIC INPUT:

None.

STAFF REPORTS:

Staff members provided updates on various projects and activities.

DIRECTOR REPORT: Preston reported:

- Kade Tippet was hired as the new resident Ranger at Finley's Landing.
- Bankston Pond Project completed
- New South Patrol Truck was picked up. We will begin outfitting with radio, lights and mobile data terminal.
- New Wine paving project is almost complete, they began the oil application.
- Pre-construction meeting for Finley's Landing Paving Project. Plans drawn by Secondary Roads Department and they plan to begin work after Memorial Day weekend.
- We received \$80,000 REAP Educational Grant for new displays at EB Lyons.
- Due to Martins absence, there will be no Green Superintendent report.
- Heritage Trail Hard Surface Project; WHKS provided preliminary estimates; concrete \$930,000 available budget \$625,000. Prices have escalated. Will need to talk about options.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR REPORT: Sisler reported:

- Swiss Valley Campground Electrical upgrade is complete. Waiting on one cabinet component.
- Water lines updated, dirt work and seeding complete.
- Bridge 28 on the Heritage Trail is being rebuilt.
- Gas Dock and fishing dock at Massey installed.
- Trees cleared from Heritage Trail and trees planted at Miller McGrath and Bowstring.
- Log jam cleared at Massey docks due to rising river.

NATURALIST REPORT: Schaefer reported:

Program statistics for March:

- 34 programs, 632 participants
- Programs included: 4th Grade Outdoor Adventures, maple syrup programs, OWLS Skunk Cabbage Hike, Library Programs, Prepping Mowing to Monarch plots at Prescott and Woodcock Walk program.
- Upcoming programs: Spring Field Trips, Volunteer Days, Forest Schools, Party for the Plant, Nature Sketching.

No formal action was taken; reports were informational.

OLD BUSINESS:

- We received 397 responses on the long-range plan, the goal is 500 so they have extended the online survey for another week.
- Moeller will be highlighting short park features videos under 60 seconds on social media.
- Preston announced we secured a \$10,000 Travel Iowa grant for three professional videos.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Motion to approve the April 2026 payables and March 2026 Procurement Cards was made by Callahan and seconded by Pfeiler. Motion carried 5-0.

NEXT MEETING:

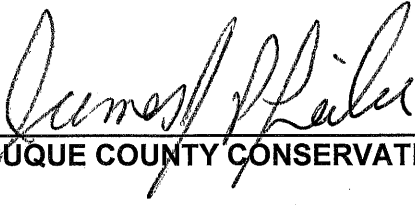
Thursday, May 21, 2026, at 4:00 P.M., Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Rd. Peosta, Iowa 52068.

ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn was made by Pfeiler and seconded by Conforti. Motion carried 5-0 and the meeting adjourned at 5:25 P.M.



DUBUQUE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBER



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