

Muscatine County Conservation Board 2008 At a Glance

Mother Nature Dominates

Last year 2008, was anything but typical for the Muscatine County Conservation Board. It started out as most other years with staff spending many of the cold months developing and constructing new displays for the Environmental Learning Center, and planning programs for the busy spring field trip season and summer nature camps.

Spring arrived and education staff was busy with field trips to Discovery Park, the Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area, Wild Cat Den, and other natural areas in Muscatine County.

Operations staff began to get the campgrounds, picnic areas and trails ready for use when the warm weather would finally set in.

The new shower/restroom building construction in the main campground at Saulsbury was well underway with plans for it to open along with the campground.

The campgrounds opened on schedule (the shower/restroom building did not) and were open for several weeks before a spring flood closed them. We managed to get in another couple of weeks of camping before they were closed again by an all-time record flood on the Cedar River.

Saulsbury Road was damaged by the flood and closed to the public until it was repaired in October. The campground and shower building opened in October for a few weeks before closing up for the winter.

On top of the flood, a big windstorm swept through the area in late July destroying or damaging numerous trees at Saulsbury plus a few at Discovery Park adding more clean up work mostly at Saulsbury.

Despite Mother Nature, things ran pretty much as usual at Discovery Park

and the Environmental Learning Center. Summer camps and other programs went on as usual, with the exception of canoe camps. No canoes went out all summer because of the flooding, although the Muscatine High School's outdoor recreation classes were able to canoe in the fall.

Flood and storm clean up continued throughout the fall and winter, but the majority of the work is finished. After last year we hope that 2009 is nothing like last year and look forward to things getting back to normal.



2008 CONSERVATION BOARD

Chairperson Mike Hartman
 Vice-chairperson Jenny Paetz
 Member Dave Jones
 Member Larry Wolf
 Member Jim Goedken

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Muscatine County Conservation Board is to preserve and enhance natural areas and resources in Muscatine County for the use and benefit of the community; to preserve sufficient natural habitats in Muscatine County; to ensure the survival of native plants and animals; to acquire, develop and manage land for public hunting, fishing, camping and recreation; and to promote public appreciation and responsibility for the environment through education.

A Message from Conservation Board Chairperson Mike Hartman

A hidden gem. That is the best description I have for our county's conservation board. Through the efforts of many past board members and more importantly the hard work of our staff, Muscatine has developed some of the best conservation areas and programs in the state.

Discovery Park was a leap of faith and a massive change of course. Our conservation staff and nature center were moved from a dead end road in a rural area of the county to an area that is seeing great urban growth. It was this forward thinking and planning that has enabled us to create a space where our citizens regularly use the facilities – almost any time of day or night Discovery Park is being used.

In a similar way our past board members and staff have laid the groundwork for a solid fiscal organization. You can see from our first 'report on conservation' that we have a solid organization that is ready to serve our visitors.

We have been able to open and develop Discovery Park with the assistance of many in the public and private sector, as well as the solid support from the County Board of Supervisors.

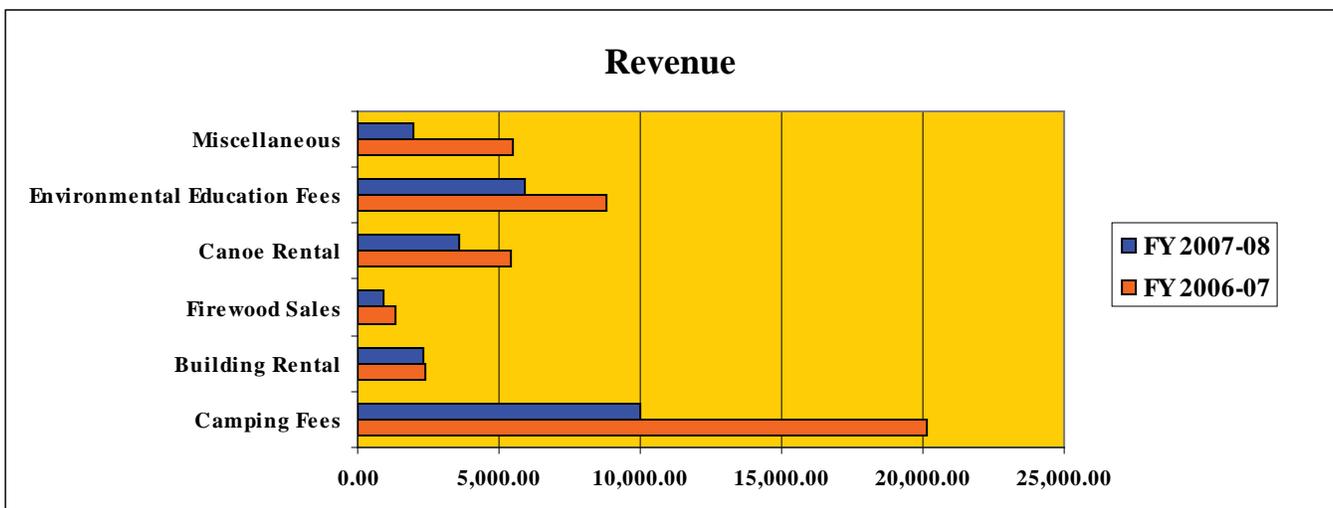
We have been able to recover from last year's horrible flooding and damage and will be offering better services at Saulsbury than we had before.

We are positioned appropriately to take advantage of any opportunity that may arise to expand our service. Even with an eye toward our fiscal restraints, our

staff has been working hard to improve the programs we offer. The board members and our staff have worked hard to limit the use of tax money and instead utilize as much non-tax funding as possible.

I encourage you to go out and take a look at your county conservation areas. Most people in our community are familiar with our naturalists, who provide programs at many different sites, but many people forget about our natural areas. A trip to Saulsbury, Discovery Park, or one of the smaller properties will bring you closer to nature and give you an opportunity to be refreshed.

Take a moment or two this year to take a closer look at some of the gems we have in our county.



Revenue in the first half of 2008 was down significantly due to the flooding. The campgrounds were only open for several weeks, very few canoes were rented, and a several summer nature camps were cancelled.

Environmental Learning Center

In 2008, more than 5,400 visitors (not including people who participated in our programs) came to the Environmental Learning Center to view the exhibits, including two travelling exhibits.

“A Salute to Songbirds” was on display from late April through the end of June.

“PROJECT InSECT” also displayed its live insect zoo from May through June.



Environmental Education Programs

In 2008, Conservation Board Staff gave 443 programs to 11,016 people. More than three-quarters of the programs were presented to children ranging in age from 18 months through high school. Almost half of those programs were given at the Environmental Learning Center and Discovery Park.

Nature hikes, fishing, canoeing, survival, animals, habitats, and geocaching were just a handful of the many programs presented to children.

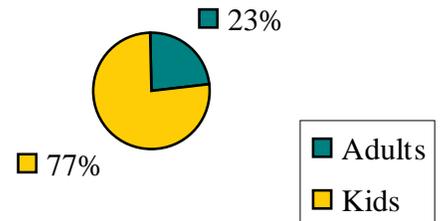
Bird watching and feeding, native plants, basket weaving, and “green” building were among the programs presented to adults.

Some of the weekend programs held were Pond Study, Bluebirds, Nature Crafts, Storytelling, and Edible Insects.

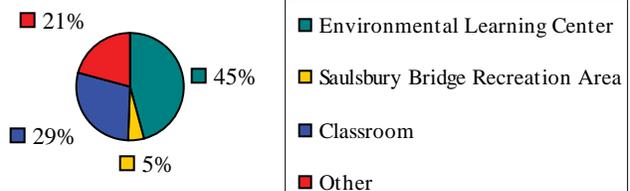
Below is a list of some of our larger programs with their attendance.

- 28th Annual Kids Fishing Seminar & Derby - 225
- 20th Annual Halloween Hike - 285
- Hunter Education Classes - 120
- Weekend Programs - 382
- Summer Nature Camps - 120

Environmental Education 11,016 people served in 2008



Environmental Education 443 programs given at various locations in 2008





Muscatine Youth Conservation Corps

In the summer of 2008, the Conservation Board hired ten youth ages 16-18 and two crew leaders for the Muscatine Youth Conservation Corps program.

The program is funded entirely with donations from local industries, businesses, organizations, government entities, and individuals.

The youth work on outdoor conservation and recreation projects for the City of Muscatine and the County Conservation Board. Although much of the work last summer consisted of flood and storm clean up, the youth worked on some painting and tree planting projects.



Cooperative Programs

In 2008, the Conservation Board partnered with many other groups for various programs and projects.

- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Alliant Energy
- Iowa State Extension Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Monsanto
- Mid-American Energy
- Muscatine Art Center
- Musser Public Library
- Iowa Trust for Local Conservation
- Young Professionals Network
- Muscatine High School Young Ambassadors
- United Way
- Muscatine Community Y



Projects

A new shower/restroom building in the main campground at the Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area was the largest project undertaken in 2008.

Other projects included tree planting at Discovery Park and Saulsbury, a new roof on the Chicken Creek restroom and construction of new displays for the Environmental Learning Center.

Many of the projects planned for last summer were put on hold because of the flood and storm clean up.



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