



Up and Down the River

JACKSON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD, WINTER 2025-26

In the Face of Intensive Agriculture

By Nathan Jones, Director

In the face of intensive agriculture, Iowa's public lands, the County Conservation System, State Wildlife Areas, and State Parks, are becoming the last critical place for outdoor recreation including hiking, wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing. For sportsmen and women, this limited public domain is rapidly becoming the only game in town.

Iowa has one of the lowest percentages of public land in the U.S. This scarcity is worsened by agricultural consolidation, intensified farming and sprawl, and the centralization of farmland under corporate entities. This often eliminates traditional "handshake access" for sportsmen and women. The pressure to maximize yields leads to the removal of marginal habitat (fence rows, woodlands, and wetlands) to plant "another row of corn or soybeans," devastating wildlife. Simultaneously, rural displacement through the loss of small farms drives habitat conversion to urban development.

Expanding public land offers a crucial, non-negotiable floor for recreational opportunity and guaranteed permanent access for all Iowans. To secure the state's outdoor future, the strategy must extend beyond public land to the vast majority of private working lands. The solution lies in encouraging agricultural diversification to support small, resilient farms.

- * Financial and Habitat Benefits: Moving away from monocultures (corn, soybeans) to incorporate diversified crops like small grains (oats, rye) and cover crops provide:
 - * Economic Stability: Diversified crop rotations and integrated livestock create new markets, enhancing the financial resilience of small farms.
 - * Wildlife Cover: These systems keep the ground covered longer, providing vital wildlife habitat and protecting Iowa's soil and water
- * The Private Access Outlet: Small, diversified, and economically stable farms are far more likely to engage in habitat protection, conservation easements, and allow private access, relieving pressure on public areas and preserving a key outlet for hunting and fishing.

While some may have disagreement over the amount of public land, most Iowans share the common goals of economic vitality for small towns and the health of the landscape. The idea that conservation conflicts with agriculture is a false contradiction. Public land generates billions in economic activity and represents the state's most intensely managed wildlife habitat. The sight of land covered in trees, wetlands, or prairie signifies a commitment to protecting soil, water, and wildlife, not neglect. By supporting both robust public land acquisition and incentivizing diversified small farms, we adopt complementary strategies that ensure our working lands are productive, our rural communities are thriving, and our natural heritage is accessible to everyone.

Invasive Species in Iowa

By Jessica Wagner, Environmental Education Coordinator

Invasive species pose a significant threat to Iowa's natural ecosystems. Invasive species are defined as non-native species that cause harm to the environment, economy, and/or human health. Sometimes the introduction was on purpose (European starling) and often it was accidental (emerald ash borer). Some non-native species do not cause harm, and therefore are not considered invasive.

Invasive species can outcompete our native species, change food webs, reduce biodiversity, alter habitats, and bring new diseases. Economic harm includes damage to agriculture (palmar amaranth, Japanese beetles), clogging water systems (zebra mussels), impacting fisheries (Asian carp, Eurasian watermilfoil), all costing trillions of dollars in damage and to control.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of invasive species spreading across Iowa. Many are familiar with Emerald Ash Borer, a beetle from Asia that has killed most all of our ash trees in the state. We can all help to reduce the spread of invasive species through simple actions in our daily lives and when doing outdoor activities.

- * **Make informed choices about the plants** you grow in your yard. Is that plant invasive in our area or nearby states? Don't buy it! Choose native species when possible. Opting for native species supports wildlife and our local food web.
- * **Don't release pets!** This has caused problems in many areas of the country when people release animals that don't belong in a local ecosystem.
- * **Take care of invasive species on your land.** Bag noxious weeds or invasive plants you are removing and place in the trash. Don't compost invasives.
- * **Clean your gear.** Before and after hiking, fishing, hunting, camping, or other outdoor activity, inspect and clean boots, waders, and equipment to remove any seeds and plant fragments. Boot brush stations work great. Stop "hitchhikers" from spreading!
- * **Clean, drain, and dry watercraft.** For boaters and anglers, this is vital. Clean all visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud from your boat, trailer, and gear. Drain all water from the motor, bilge, and live wells before leaving the water access.
- * **Dispose of bait properly.** Do not release live bait, fish, or aquarium water into a nearby water source. Put unwanted bait in the trash.
- * **Get involved.** Help out at local work day events on public lands helping to remove invasive species. Jackson County Conservation hosts work days throughout the year—join us in restoring native habitat at our county parks!

Be part of the solution—learn about invasive species in the area you live—and help to eliminate them!

Meet our Green Iowa AmeriCorps Members!

Abby & Andrea are serving with Jackson County Conservation from October 2025—September 2026.

Hi my name is Abby Flanagan! I am one of the Green Iowa AmeriCorps serving with Jackson County Conservation. I grew up in Northern Linn county where I graduated from North Linn High School before continuing my education to obtain my AA degree, a B.A. in Multidisciplinary Studies with a Concentration in Environmental Science, and another B.A. in Biology- Ecological Science.

I've always loved the outdoors and being with JCC has been a great opportunity to learn new skills. Some skills that I have learned so far have included prescribed fire, girdling trees, and how to use a chainsaw for prairie restoration and timber management. I've also learned a lot about environmental education programs and how to create them for the public and students. I'm looking forward to continuing to learn from the knowledgeable staff here at JCC!



Hi my name is Andrea Allen and I am a Green Iowa AmeriCorps member serving an 11-month term as a Naturalist with Jackson County Conservation. I'm from Illinois and graduated from Southern Illinois University with a B.S in Outdoor Recreation in 2023.

I visited Maquoketa for the first time in the spring and stopped by the Hurstville Interpretive Center. Ever since that visit I was interested in working here, so I feel really lucky to have this opportunity. I like that this position allows me to share my passion for the outdoors with others. In my free time I enjoy hiking, pretty much any activity that involves water, and exploring new places. My goal after graduation was to do something that would allow me to make a difference and help protect the environment so we can all continue to enjoy these beautiful places. I'm so happy that I'm able to do that with Jackson County Conservation.



Snowshoeing & Ice Skating!

We are offering FREE use of our snowshoes and ice skates during the Hurstville Center's open hours (weekdays 9-4). They are a great way to get outside and enjoy the outdoors this winter. Weekend rentals are \$5/pair. Friends members receive a free rental! A minimum 4" of snow/ice is needed.



Winter Calendar of Events

Registration is REQUIRED at least 48 hours in advance for **ALL programs**—unless otherwise noted.

Register by calling (563) 652-3783 or emailing conservation@jacksoncounty.iowa.gov

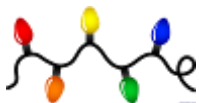
Programs are free of charge unless otherwise noted. Donations are accepted.

To register for programs with a fee, visit: <https://3common.com/u/jacksoncountyconservation>

Holiday Light Recycling Now through January 7

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Drop off old and broken lights at the Center. The Jackson County Energy District coordinates this program. All wiring in the lights is recycled.



Leave No Trace for Kids

Friday, January 2 from 1:00-2:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Looking to get out of the house this winter and have a fun, educational afternoon? Bring the kids to the Center to learn the seven principles of Leave No Trace, enjoy a fun activity, and make a cool craft to take home. This program is geared for youth ages 5-10, who must be accompanied by an adult. Registration required by Tuesday, December 30.

Winter Seed Sowing & Project Wingspan

Sunday, January 11 from 2:00-3:30 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Project Wingspan seeks to create, enhance, and restore pollinator habitat across our region. Gina Bartleson, Project Wingspan Iowa State Coordinator, will talk about the impact of pollinators and pollinator decline, and what Project Wingspan does to help pollinators. Following the presentation, participants will prepare their own milk jug with native plant seeds to take home. Winter sowing for native plants is a low-effort, natural method for starting native seeds. Register by Jan 8.

Ice Fishing

Saturday, January 17 from 10:00 AM—Noon

At Selzer Pond, 10047 168th Ave, Maquoketa

Learn how to ice fish, what equipment is needed, and ask questions to get you going with this great winter activity. Equipment will be provided. All ages and skill levels are welcome! Those 16 & older need a fishing license to fish.



Ambassador Animal Meet & Greet

Monday, January 19 at 2:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

No school? No problem! Come meet our turtle and snake animal ambassadors up close! Learn about their jobs at the center, what their day-to-day life looks like, ask all your questions, and feel the animals. This program is free and open to all ages!

Snowshoeing for Adults (OWLS event)

Friday, January 23 at 1:00 PM

At Whitewater Canyon, Bernard

Explore the winter wonderland on a snowshoe guided hike led by county naturalists. Bring your own snowshoes or borrow ours! OWLS events are open to any adult interested in outdoor activities!



Winter Foraging Workshop

Sunday, January 25 from 1:00-3:00 PM

At Prairie Creek Recreation Area, Pavilion

Nuts, needles, and nibbling! Come learn safe foraging techniques, common winter plants to harvest, how to ID them, and suggested recipes to try. We will talk about the plants and foraging, hike out on the trail to forage some plants, and then come back and make and taste a few recipes. Please dress for the weather. Cost is \$5. Registration required by January 21.

Full Moon Luminary Walk

Saturday, January 31 from 6:00-7:30 PM

At Spruce Creek Park, north of Bellevue

Let luminaries and a full moon light your way as you walk around the campground after dark. Begin at the boat ramp parking lot. Walk is about 1 mile in length.



Birdfeeder Workshop

Wednesday, February 4 from 4:00-6:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Winter is a great time to feed the birds! Participants will build bird feeders to take home, learn about Iowa birds, and get info on the Great Backyard Bird Count! Cost: \$15. Registration required by Feb 2.

Winter Calendar of Events Continued

"Turtly" Over You **February 1—14**

Online

Have an old Ex still on your mind? We can help! Take some of your pent up frustration out while also helping our animal ambassadors! For the first two weeks of February, donate online to symbolically name a worm, cockroach, or mouse after your bad ex! Get a funny valentine card with your donation, and check out our Facebook and Instagram on February 16 to watch our animals be fed the revenge meal.



Your Ex!

Paint & Sip

Saturday, February 7 from 5:00-7:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Local artist Shelby Davison will be leading us in a relaxing evening of step-by-step nature painting! This event will be 21+ BYOB, or purchase a bottle of wine from our gift shop. All supplies provided. Cost: \$20. Registration required by February 5.

Animal Enrichment DIY

Friday, February 13 from 2:00-3:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Learn the benefits behind animal enrichment and what that could look like for different animals. We will create animal enrichment activities to engage the animal ambassadors (turtles & snakes) at the Center. All materials provided. And take a list of ideas home for your pets! Geared for kids ages 5-12.

Birds & the Bees

Saturday, February 14 at 5:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Looking for a fun way to spice up your Valentine's Day? Join Naturalists Julia & Macey in discovering the crazy world of animal mating rituals. This event is 21+ and BYOB, or you can purchase a bottle of wine from our gift shop. Charcuterie will be provided. Cost is \$15 per person. Registration required by Feb 11.



Owl Prowl

Friday, February 20 at 6:30 PM

At Prairie Creek Recreation Area

Hoot, whinny or monkey call – what sound do owls in Iowa make? Learn more about Iowa's owls and their amazing nighttime adaptations. The program will begin at the Pavilion with a brief presentation about owls. We will then walk the trails after dark to call and listen for owls.



Winter Seed Sowing (OWLS event)

Thursday, February 26 from 10:00-11:00 AM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Winter sowing for native plants is a low-effort, natural method for starting native seeds. Learn more about growing native plants and prepare a milk jug with native seeds to take home. Cost is \$5. OWLS events are for adults interested in the outdoors!

Bird House Workshop

Friday, February 27 from 2:00-4:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center



Birdhouses are a wonderful addition to your yard! Build a wren or bluebird house at the workshop. All materials and instruction will be provided. Cost is \$10 per birdhouse. Can't make it to the workshop? Pick up a kit, \$10, or we will build it for you, \$15. Wood duck houses already assembled, \$40. Registration required by Monday, February 23.

Terrarium Class

Friday, March 13 from 2:00-4:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Come make your own mini ecosystem! Learn about different types of terrariums and then build your own. Materials will be provided. Cost is \$10. Registration is required by March 10.

Skunk Cabbage Hike (OWLS Event)

Friday, March 20 at 10:00 AM

At Swiss Valley Nature Preserve

Enjoy a guided hike in search of the extremely early blooming skunk cabbage. OWLS events are open to any adult interested in outdoor activities!

Plant Swap

Friday, March 27 from 4:00-6:00 PM

At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Bring all your house plants, propagations, seeds, and outdoor plants for our spring plant swap. This is a great way to add to your collection, and help others start theirs. Stay the whole time and chat with other plant lovers, or just stop to swap. This program is great for all levels of plant enthusiasts.



Sunset Hike

Monday, March 30 from 6:30-8:00 PM

At Prairie Creek Recreation Area

Celebrate National Hike in a Park Day with a Sunset Hike! We will hike around the prairie trails and catch the last light of the day, enjoying the beautiful sunset colors.



Friends of Jackson County Conservation

Support Your Local Parks— Become a Friend or renew your membership today!

A big thank you to those who continue to renew their membership with Friends of JCC!! The dollars brought in through membership dues help sustain our organization and **we appreciate your support!**

Membership is for a calendar year. That means, **January 1st is renewal time!** Clip the portion below and mail in. Make sure we have an up-to-date email address. Most of our correspondence throughout the year is via email.

Save us time, postage, and paper by mailing in your membership before mid-February when we send out a mailing to Friends members.

Friends of Jackson County Conservation Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone number: _____

Email Address: _____

Type of Membership

☐

Student \$5

☐

Regular \$10

☐

Senior Citizen \$5

☐

Family \$20

☐

Sustaining \$50

☐

Individual Life \$500

I'd like to make an additional donation to support my local parks in the amount of _____

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Please send form and money to:
Friends of Jackson County Conservation
18670 63rd Street, Maquoketa, Iowa 52060

The Friends of Jackson County Conservation brings people together through educational and recreational opportunities in partnership with the Jackson County Conservation Board and inspires people to understand and care for our environment.

Join us for the Next Friends Meeting Tuesday, January 13

6:00 PM at the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Potluck at 5:30 PM, bring your own beverage, tableware, and a dish to share!



Agenda and minutes from last meeting will be sent via email a few days before the meeting. Didn't get the email? Make sure we have your up-to-date contact info.

Mark your calendars for 2026 Friends Meeting Dates:
January 13, April 14, June 9, October 13
(2nd Tuesday)

Prairie Creek Project Update

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Prairie Creek Enhancement Project! Friends raised over \$144,000 through donations and grants for the project. The disc golf course is open and people have been playing since the baskets were installed in July. Asphalt was poured for the trail from town along Highway 64 late this fall. Conservation Staff will be building a small picnic shelter on the northeast side of the park off Highway 64. A pit toilet has been installed in that area as well as a bridge to connect the trail system in the park.

2026 Phenology Calendars

The 2026 Phenology Calendar is now available! Pick up at the gift shop at the Hurstville Interpretive Center (\$10) or order online and we will mail it to you (\$12).

Phenology is the study of periodic plant and animal life cycle events, like when flowers bloom, birds migrate, animals hibernate or begin mating. Our calendar is phenology of Eastern Iowa.

Order at: <https://givebutter.com/JCCphenologycalendar>

Fall Fun with Jackson CCB!



A shout out to Girl Scout Troop #1015 for using their cookie money to purchase two benches made out of 100% recycled plastic for our parks!



Maquoketa 8th & Bellevue 9th graders spent a day on the Maquoketa River this fall. Students learned to paddle, water safety, and had fun swimming and finding mussels in the river.



5th graders from Andrew, Easton Valley, and Marquette Catholic Schools got to spend a week at local parks for School of the Wild this fall. Exploring woodlands, prairies, and water. Check out that praying mantis they caught!

Park Ranger Katelyn sets fire during a prescribed woodland fire at Buzzard Ridge this fall.

What do you call a snowman temper tantrum?

A meltdown!

Kids Corner

What often falls but doesn't get hurt?

Snow!

Winter Bucket List



☐ Go snowshoeing



☐ Shovel snow for someone



☐ Go ice skating

Do a puzzle ☐



☐ Build a snowman



☐ Build a snow fort



☐ Read a book



☐ Go sledding



☐ Bake something

☐ Go ice fishing





A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

*Jackson County Conservation would like to **thank and acknowledge** the following individuals, organizations and businesses for their continued support and donations. With your help, we have been able to do so much more!!!*

Volunteers—Kevin Burns, Karen Manning, Sarah Hobbs, Mary Hayward, Jeanette Hartung-Schroeder, Deb Frieden, Marie Rossman, Jeff Tampir, Kent Crawford, Amanda Klemp & Family, Larry McDevitt, Mike Griffin, Angie Lichter, Jim England, Kenny Derganz, Shelby Davison

Friends Stand at Muster on the Maquoketa—Ann Burns, Pam Bahr, Kevin Burns, Sheila Root, Dale Root, Jo Ellen Langerman, Mary Hayward, Jennie Willcox, Julie Reuter, Bill Hainstock, Wendy Hainstock, Matt Andresen, Emily Highnam

Codfish Fundraiser—Jo Ellen Langerman, Sheila Root, Jess Wagner, Tony Vorwald, Emily Highnam, Wendy Hainstock, Bill Hainstock, Mary Hayward, Sarah Hobbs, Jennie Willcox, Greg Ueland, Pam True, Dale Root, Ann Burns, Kim Jochum, Julia Rodwald, Bruce Fisher, Laura Fisher, Pam Bahr, Jim England, Macey Yaeger

Donations—Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, Carol Hammill, Optimist Club of Maquoketa, Maquoketa Brewing, Kiwanis Club of Maquoketa, Kwik Trip Kares Grant, Friends of Maquoketa Caves, Jackson County Retired Teacher Personnel, Jessica Wagner, J. Kahn, Bruce & Laura Fisher, Kathy Banowetz, Micheal & Teresa Nickeson, Matt & Marilyn Osterhaus, L. Larabee Studio, Angie Petit Lichter, Colleen & Denise Miller, David Kunzweiler, Bill & Bonnie Schwenker

Birdies for Charity Donations—Jim England & Pam Bahr, Diane Baker, Robert & Margaret Baugh, Ann & Kevin Burns, Janice Carr, Bruce Fisher, Peggy Flenker, Mary Hayward, Sarah Hobbs, Brenda Kunau, Kevin Kutsch, Jo Ellen Langerman, Paul Miller, Osterhaus Pharmacy, Sheila Root, Eunice Schladetzky, Marilyn Schroeder, Supplemental Insurance, Timber City Chiropractic

Donations made in memory of:

Virf Banowetz



Conservation Board Members

Larry McDevitt	Maquoketa	319/541-6357
Mike Griffin	Springbrook	563/357-1736
Jim England	Maquoketa	563/652-3213
Mary Hayward	Maquoketa	563/357-0814
Angie Lichter	Maquoketa	563/599-6573

The Jackson County Conservation Board meets the third Tuesday of every month at 5:00 pm.
Public welcome.

Conservation Staff



Nathan Jones, Executive Director
Sheila Root, Office Manager
Jessica Wagner, EE Coordinator, Newsletter Editor
Macey Jurczyk, Naturalist
Julia Rodewald, Naturalist
Jeannie Collins-Heer, Park Ranger/Roadside Manager
Tony Vorwald, Natural Resources Ecologist
Jerry Widel, Operation Technician
Katelyn Hicks, Park Ranger
Isaac Anderson, Park Ranger

Address & Contact Information

18670 63rd Street Maquoketa, IA 52060
Phone: (563) 652-3783

Websites:

JacksonCCB.com

Www.MyCountyParks.com

<https://jacksoncounty.iowa.gov/>

www.facebook.com/HurstvilleInterpretiveCenter

Office Hours / Hurstville Center

18670 63rd Street Maquoketa, IA 52060
Weekdays: Monday–Friday 9:00 am–4:00 pm
Weekends: CLOSED Dec–Mar;
12:00–5:00 April–October

Holidays:

CLOSED Dec 24, 25, 31, Jan 1
OPEN Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day

Friends of Jackson County Conservation
Hurstville Interpretive Center
18670 63rd Street
Maquoketa, IA 52060

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JACKSON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD UP AND DOWN THE RIVER—Winter 2025-26 Newsletter

Hunter Education Field Days

Hunter Education is a mandatory course required to be completed before you can buy an Iowa Hunting license. This applies to anyone born after January 1, 1972.

Hunter Education courses introduce students to important life-long skills for outdoor recreational opportunities. Classes discuss wildlife identification, hunting laws, and firearm safety. Hunter education also stresses wildlife management, the importance of individual responsibility, and outdoor ethics.

Jackson County Conservation holds Field Days in the spring (March/April) and late summer (Aug). These field days are for students that complete the online course. We highly recommend students begin the online course work well in advance of a field day so they have time to complete all online work.

For more information about Iowa DNR Hunter Education Program, visit <https://www.iowa.gov/how-do-i-enroll-hunter-education-course>

New Boat Ramp at Bridgeport

One of the top priorities of our Maquoketa River Water Trail plan was to construct a paved boat ramp at Bridgeport access on the Maquoketa River, just north of Maquoketa at the Highway 62 bridge.

Inline Excavating installed the boat ramp this fall, with final work being done in the spring. River users will enjoy a new and improved access next season!

Project cost: ~\$80,000. We received an Iowa DNR Water Trails grant for \$53,920.

Our match is \$26,080. Thank you to all the donors that contributed \$5,000+ to bring down our costs for this ramp and the new ramp at Spruce Creek.

