

Director's Message

Tolif Hunt, Executive Director



Since 2004, Whiterock Conservancy has grown significantly as an organization and as a landscape thanks to the continued, and very generous, planned land gift from the Garst family. Over the past 6 years, Whiterock Conservancy has received over 46% of the total planned 5366 acre land gift, the most recent being a 40 acre land donation on the west side of Whiterock, which helped the Whiterock land gift reach the 2,500 acre milestone.

Whiterock is your land too and part of our mission is to provide a place where you can explore this wonderful Iowa outdoor experience by managing this land for recreation. We want our guests to be able to see, benefit from, and enjoy many of the habitats that come together to create this unique land treasure.

We have also sought to further connect and engage visitors through volunteer programs, outdoor recreational opportunities, and community development.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the Garst family for providing Iowa with this unique and diverse landscape and entrusting its future to the Whiterock Conservancy. We would like to honor their partnership with us and say thank you for sharing this amazing land with Iowa.



1390 Highway 141 □ Coon Rapids, IA 50058
(712) 684-2697
www.whiterockconservancy.org

Expanding Access to Whiterock

Liz Garst, Whiterock Conservancy Board Member

Whiterock Trail Projects

Now that the 10-mile loop connecting Whiterock with Coon Rapids has been completed, Whiterock Conservancy is working on two other exciting trail projects. Under the leadership of our local non-profit Creating Great Places, the City of Coon Rapids, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Whiterock, and the community are working to connect our local trails to regional trail systems. When complete, Coon Rapids and Whiterock will be a hub connecting three important Iowa trail systems—the Raccoon River Valley recreational trail, the Sauk Trail, and the T-Bone Trail. This is a long-term project that will take years, extensive fund raising, and regional cooperation to complete but will attract visitors from across the Midwest to our area.

Sustainable Soft Trails

As for the second project, Whiterock has secured the funding to plan and begin construction of a 30 mile Sustainable Soft Trail network on its own property. The new trail network will replace the eroding, poorly marked and, in some places, non-existent “trails” now used by back-country hikers and equestrians at Whiterock. The existing trail system was cobbled together from old farm access roads and deer paths and it is neither environmentally nor

economically sustainable.

“Soft” trail refers to natural surface or dirt trails. The cutting-edge, tightly-engineered but low-cost design relies on “rolling contour” trails that cut across the sides of hills, rolling up and down to shed water and improve the visitor experience. Because the trail is cut into the hillside, slopes above and below the trail are steep and keep visitors on the track naturally. Water crossings are “hardened” to protect the water resource. Roughly 2/3 of the network will be “single track,” only wide enough for riding or hiking single file. The other 1/3 will be a double tracked to accommodate electric carts, ambulances and maintenance equipment. The trail will be designed to accommodate horseback riders, mountain bikers, hikers and cross-country skiers, while minimizing conflicts between these user groups through good design and management.

Science is an exciting project component. This summer ecologists, geologists, archaeologists and water specialists will work with the soft trail designer, to identify trail destinations with learning opportunities and beauty while still protecting fragile resources. The scientists will also plan monitoring protocols and conduct baseline studies

Ecology Corner

Bobcats in the Raccoon River Watershed
Bill Clark, Iowa State University

Bobcats are naturally recolonizing Iowa, including the Raccoon River watershed. Although bobcats are highly adaptable, found in swamps in the Southeast to deserts in the Southwest and into the forests of southern Canada, they were essentially extirpated from the Cornbelt as the landscape was settled and farmed. Although they were probably never completely gone from Iowa, they were listed as endangered in 1977 when the state first established such designations for wildlife. But by the 1990's increasing numbers of automobile kills and sightings of bobcats caused the Iowa DNR to begin a cooperative study with ISU to understand their population and landscape ecology.

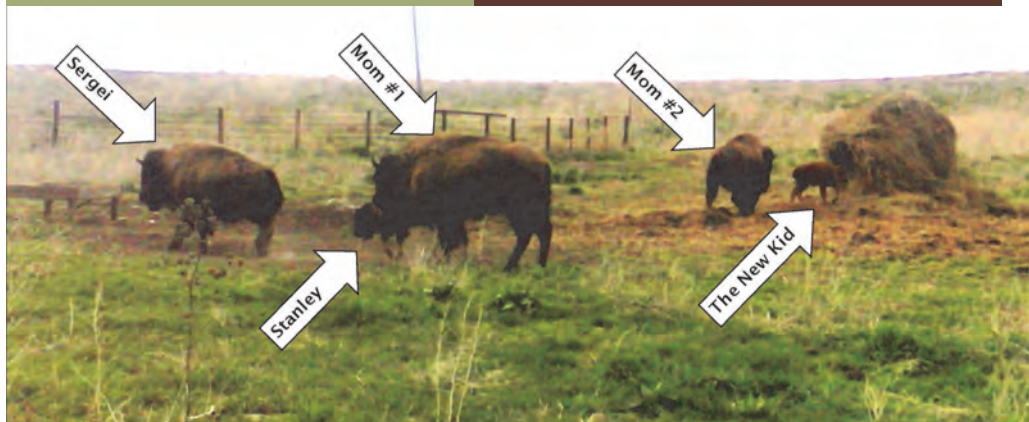
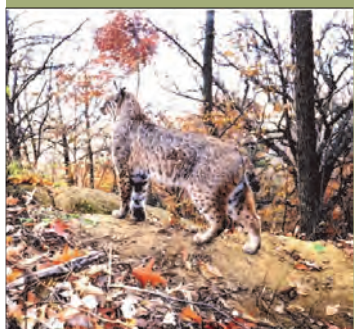
Bobcats are specialized carnivores, primarily catching cottontails, mice, and squirrels. Although sportsman often remark that bobcats are causing declines in pheasants and turkeys, our study revealed bird feathers in less than 3% of over

150 stomachs examined. Bobcats begin breeding as early as February and most kittens are born in late spring. Adult females 2-years-old or older have one litter of 2 to 4 kittens each spring that generally stay with mother until they are approaching a year old. In south central Iowa where we radio-collared over 150 bobcats, females have a home range area of 6 to 10 square miles whereas male home ranges average around 22 square miles. For perspective,

consider that with approximately 4300 acres (~ 6 ½ square miles), Whiterock Conservancy's habitat is sufficient for the territory of 1 female with kittens. Most bobcats don't live past age 5. The oldest animal we aged by tooth cross-section was 13.

Bobcats prefer forest patches surrounded by other perennial habit such as grassland and brushy pastures. Forest patches with abrupt edges with adjacent cropland are not highly suitable habitat. Based on the positive association with forest/grassland complexes and a negative association with cropland, we identified the Raccoon River watershed as an area where bobcats might potentially increase. Surveys of observations by archery hunters in Guthrie County reported just over 4 bobcats sighted per 1000 hours as compared to sighting rates in some southern Iowa counties of more than 13 per 1000 hours.

Check out our Ecology Blog at:
<http://whiterockconservancy.wordpress.com/>



News Briefs

GCCF awards WRC funding for River Recreation Safety Event

Guthrie County Community Foundation awarded \$5,200 to WRC for a recreational river safety program and enhance its ability to engage people with the Middle Raccoon River.

Utilizing this new resource, WRC will host a Community River Safety Event & Float on July 29th, 2011

featuring a trip from Whiterock Conservancy to the Highway 25 bridge down the Middle Raccoon River.

Project funds will be used to purchase kayaks, floatation devices, paddles, build a kayak trailer, and implement the event with safety training provided by the Iowa DNR River Programs. This event will be free and open to the public, but with limited spots available. Participants will learn how to safely operate canoes and kayaks on the river and then apply their skills on a 6 hour river trip followed by a BBQ at the Riverhouse. How to register will be announced on Facebook and the WRC website.

Spring Baby Buffalo Surprise!

While out on a land tour with our tenant farmers, we spotted another addition to our bison herd! This makes number nine to the bison family here at Whiterock! We traditionally let the person that first sighted these new calves name it, but this time we are opening this up to our friends (you!). Please email Trent Milam, Resort Manager at resort@whiterockconservancy.org, by August 31st with your suggestion. The winner will be randomly selected, announced in our next newsletter and will also receive a weekend stay in our Garden Terrace Room at the Garst Farm B&B.

Expanding Access to Whiterock

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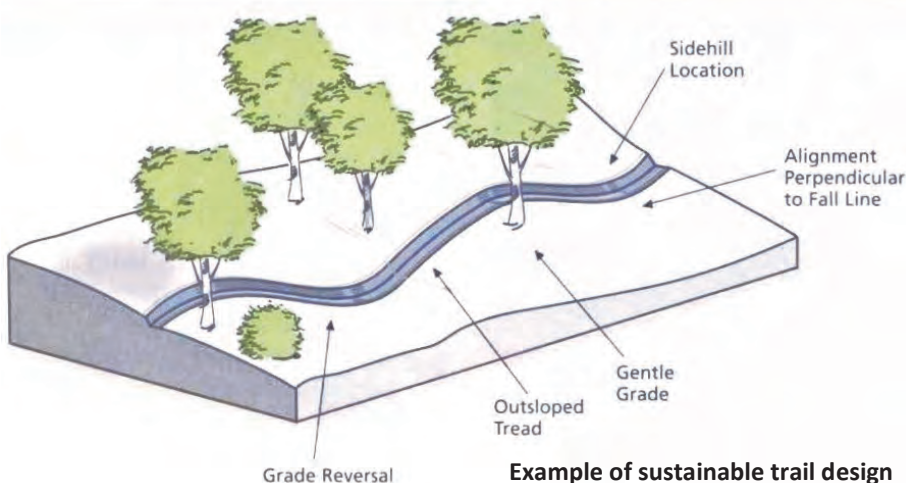
before construction commences, so that we can measure the impact of trails on natural resources over time.

Annual monitoring will be used to check on trail condition, erosion and invasive species, and longer term studies will assess trail impacts on plant communities, micro-climates, water quality,

Funding

Funding for the first phases of the project—the archaeological, geological, and environmental baseline assessments, the construction of the trails, purchase of some needed maintenance equipment, wildlife viewing infrastructure, river access development, demonstration stream bank restoration and some marketing of the site—is

Rolling Contour Trail



Example of sustainable trail design

insects, etc. A strong monitoring program will ensure that we identify and address problems early. User fees will be collected and will be set at a rate sufficient to maintain the trail in an environmentally sustainable way. Economic and environmental sustainability and user satisfaction and learning will be key assessment factors.

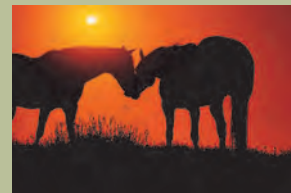
being provided through federal transportation dollars (\$355,000), an Iowa Federal Recreational Trails Program grant (\$474,200), and a private match (\$220,000). The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is providing technical assistance and financial oversight for the project and the National Park Service is also providing

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Mark Your Calendars!

June 19th American Volkssport Association Coon Rapids / Whiterock Walk

July 16th ACTHA Trail Ride at Whiterock



July 14th 3rd Annual Prairie Fundraiser with:

Matt Woods and The Thunderbolts



September 1st to 5th 2011 Iowa Star Party

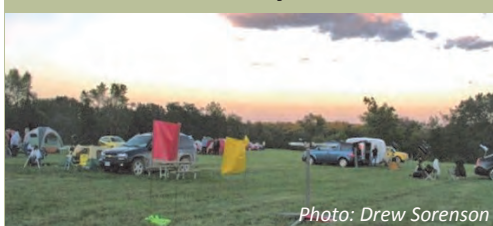


Photo: Drew Sorenson

For more info on our events, contact Trent Milam at 712-684-2964 x112 or resort@whiterockconservancy.org



**Our Thanks to You!
Reserve 1 Canoe Float
w/ Shuttle & Get the
2nd Canoe for Free!**

**Limited to 2 canoes.
Please present this coupon on arrival.
Expires 9/30/11**

Expanding Access to Whiterock

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technical assistance. We still need to raise an additional \$680,000 to complete the project.

The newly-updated trail system, combined with the natural beauty and diversity of the land, is expected to produce a substantial and sustained increase in visitors. Improved public access will help Whiterock strengthen its mission-

driven goal of engaging the public in learning about Iowa's ecology and developing their own conservation ethic.

SPECIAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.

The consulting scientists need volunteers to assist them with their work. For example, the ecologist seeks volunteers to record data and to run insect pitfall traps and the archaeologist seeks volunteers to help with field

reconnaissance in late fall and next spring, after burns. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn from the experts! Scientific expertise is also welcome. Please contact Liz Garst, Project Manager at lizgarst@gliddenwildblue.com.

The Whiterock Conservancy Soft Trails project will provide a multi-use trail system for a variety of exciting recreational opportunities.



If you prefer to receive your newsletter electronically, please let us know at whiterock@whiterockconservancy.com.



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