



openspaces

Newsletter for Whiterock Conservancy

A Non-Profit Land Trust

Sandi Yoder to Serve as Interim Director

On July 1, Ken Herring, President of the Whiterock Conservancy's Board of Directors, announced that Sandi Yoder will serve as the organization's Interim Director while the search for a new Executive Director continues. Yoder has been working with Whiterock as a fundraising consultant, helping to raise funds to meet annual operating expenses as well as raising funds for Whiterock's new Internal Soft Trails Project. Yoder came to Whiterock with extensive experience in the non-profit field—having served as President and CEO of Living History Farms and Executive Director of the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer in Grand Island, NE, both of which developed award-winning programs during her tenure.

Yoder will be responsible for the daily operations of the organization with the help of a great staff and board members Liz and Rachel Garst. The focus will be on the search for a new Executive Director and a full-time Director of Development and Communications. Job descriptions and application instructions are posted on our website: www.whiterockconservancy.org.

From Sandi:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to serve as Whiterock's Interim Director for the next several months. This is a very exciting time at Whiterock! With the recent acquisition of the 35-acre Dobby's Place, the continuing research that is such a critical part of the planning for and design of our 35-mile Internal Soft Trails Project, and the constant work on preserving and restoring our magnificent landscape and heritage, we are making important progress in achieving our goal of creating a place where visitors of all ages can experience Whiterock's uniqueness.

And Whiterock is truly unique with its mix of unbroken expanses of natural and rural landscapes, 105-million-year-old white rock bluffs, geological formations dating back 16 million years, and rolling pastures, oak savannas, timber, native and restored prairies, wetlands, and crop ground that are critical to hundreds of species of birds, mammals, and other wildlife. To this landscape we add the Garst Farm made famous as the home of Roswell Garst, one of our nation's hybrid seed pioneers and the site of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's historic 1959 trip to the United States.



1390 Highway 141
Coon Rapids, IA 50058
(712) 684-2697

www.whiterockconservancy.org

Phone extensions:

x111 Sandi Yoder, Interim Exec. Dir.
x112 Shirley Smith, Guest Svcs. Mgr.
x114 Chris Troendle, Land Manager
x115 Darwin Pierce, Farm Manager
x117 April Schultes, Office Manager

Although the land has been here for millions of years, Whiterock itself would not have been possible without the generosity of the Garst family and the hundreds of donors who have supported Whiterock. And the need for your support continues. I hope that you will join us in helping Whiterock preserve and restore the land and provide wonderful outdoor experiences for this and future generations!

THANK YOU to the Bio Blitz Participants

We had 87 attendees at this year's Bio Blitz. It was an amazing group of volunteers, leaders, donors, and staff who made the program an outstanding success.

During the 24-hour blitz we found many reptiles, birds, amphibians, butterflies, moths, bats, tracks from mammals and birds, and fish. We also learned more about the geologic formations at Whiterock and found two new prehistoric sites. We'll post a list of this year's findings on our website: www.whiterockconservancy.org



A special shout-out to the scientists who led each team as they explored various sections of Whiterock, day and night! Our leaders were: Joe Artz, Russell Benedict, Rebecca Christoffel, Bill Clark, John Olson, James Durbin, Tom Rosburg, Stephanie Shepherd, and Rachel Simmons.

BUFFALO UPDATE

Our rejuvenation program for our buffalo herd is a success! Three buffalo calves were born this spring. This will bring our total herd to 12 animals. The buffalo are maintained on 50 acres of newly-established prairie.

You can view the herd by taking the trail (walkers and mountain bikers welcome) starting at the Garst Farm and heading southeast, up the hill, and the buffalo pasture will be on your right.

Geology at Whiterock Conservancy - Part 2: Oldest Rocks!

Whiterock has a very rich geologic history, starting with its oldest rocks from about 310 million years ago (the Middle Pennsylvanian period). Whiterock was part of a huge swamp and was near the equator on a flat coastal plain of a supercontinent called Laurasia. Vegetation flourished in the tropical climate and the plants included large horsetails, mosses and rushes. The swamp was populated by dragonflies, early reptiles, and a wide variety of amphibians and insects, including more than 1,000 species of cockroaches!

A second supercontinent, Gondwana was located around the South Pole. Glaciers periodically built up in Gondwana. The glacial ice captured vast volumes of water which caused sea levels to drop around the globe. During warmer intervals, the water returned to the ocean causing sea levels to again rise. This raising of sea levels would result in flooding and the lowering of sea levels resulted in exposing vast areas of land in Laurasia. Thick layers of alternating organic-rich swamps deposits, mud and shallow marine limestone then formed on Laurasia. These deposits became today's extensive coal deposits in the Appalachians, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa, including right here at Whiterock!



At left: Artist's drawing of a Pennsylvanian coal swamp. "A millipede (Arthropleura) measuring two meters long, 25cm wide, crawls over the dead scaly bark of a Lepidodendron tree (Lepido=scaly, dendron=tree). Flying nearby is a dragonfly with wings measuring two feet across. Main trees at the back (forest), including growing trees in the middle, are Lepidodendron. Calamites: arcing structure on left and pair in distant. Relative of horsetails. Horsetails in water. From web site of Richard Bizley <http://www.bizleyart.com/gallery/prehistoric/palaeozoic/carboniferous/carboniferous-scene-1>.

You can see these Pennsylvanian period rocks downriver from the River House bridge. They are primarily gray mudstone, split by occasional thin coal seams. Look for them in the south bank of the river. These rocks were deposited in swamps and poorly drained floodplains of rivers traversing a broad coastal plain. The coal was compressed from woody peat after it was deeply buried during the later parts of the Pennsylvanian and younger geological periods, as Laurasia drifted north and the climate become drier.

A coal seam south of Spring Brook State Park, about 10 miles downriver, supported a small scale mining industry from 1894 through 1941. Coal mining in the Whiterock valley was generally less successful, though there were numerous attempts over the same time period, on both sides of the river, from the River House campground and downward. The biggest problem was water seepage into the shafts which flooded the mines. Today the wetland seeps remain one of the most predominant features of the lower slopes of the Whiterock valley.

Part 3 of this series will discuss the successful coal mining operations of the Pierce family. Watch for this article in the next edition of OpenSpaces.

Our thanks to:

Dr. Art Bettis at the University of Iowa for his summary of the geosciences of Whiterock as part of the Soft Trail Project. This article is extracted from his work.



10th Annual Star Party

Astronomers from across the Midwest, drawn by the darkest skies in Iowa, are gathering at Whiterock in Mid-September for their annual Star Party. The general public is invited out to the Whiterock star field at dusk on **Friday, September 14th** (assuming clear skies), to see

the wonders of the universe through the telescopes of more than a dozen volunteer astronomers. *Free will donations are welcomed.* Be sure to check the weather forecast as cloudy skies will cancel the Friday's public viewing. Additional information at www.iowastarparty.com.

Your family can also have its own star party! At night the Star Field comes alive with vast views of the stars and is a delight for stargazers. The book, [A Child's Introduction to the Night Sky](#) by Michael Driscoll & Meredith Hamilton, is a great introduction to the fun of stargazing and has colorful illustrations and discussion starters for families. Plan your next overnight camping adventure with us. For more information, call Shirley at (712) 684-2697 extension 112.

Fall Prescribed Fire Season is About to Begin!

Whiterock Conservancy's prescribed fire program is about restoration, education, and fun. Please volunteer with us this autumn (early November). You'll learn the basics of prescribed fire, get acquainted with the Whiterock landscape, meet like-minded volunteers, and help us do restorative work.

Contact Chris Troendle at landmanager@whiterockconservancy.org to sign up for the fire crew email list.

THANKS to the Guthrie County Community Foundation

<http://www.guthriecenter.com/GCCF.htm>

We are excited to receive a GCCF grant to help us purchase new chain saws and safety equipment. These will be put to good use in cutting down invasive or trashy trees that don't belong in the restored savannas, oak forests, and other sections of Whiterock.

WANTED: Hobby Farmer!

Do you need a place to store your tractor? Do you want to take your tractor out for an occasional ride? We have room to store your tractor if you have some time to help us conduct maintenance mowing throughout the growing season. Mowing makes a big difference in our efforts to control invasive and non-prairie species and we need help getting it done. Please contact Chris at landmanager@whiterockconservancy.org to discuss the possibilities.

Volunteer Opportunities

Whiterock Conservancy is looking for anyone interested in donating their time to help us manage our lands and buildings. We need assistance with maintenance mowing, prescribed fire burns, trail maintenance, brush management, invasive species removal, gardening, fencing, building repairs, and more. If you or someone you know is interested, please let us know how you can help! **Contact Chris Troendle by phone at (712) 684-2697 ext. 114 or email Chris at**

landmanager@whiterockconservancy.org.

In-Kind Donations

With so many volunteers and our never-ending renovation and landscaping activities, we find ourselves in need of the following:

- Trail mower/belly mower
- Dump trailer
- 4X4 pickup in decent shape
- Skid steer loader
- Woodworking tools
- Salt and mineral blocks for our buffalo herd or a donation for feed
- ATV in working condition
- Splitting maul & axes
- Wood splitter
- Trailer
- Riding lawn mower
- Hay wagon/running gear
- Tractor accessories
- Hay mower
- Hay baler
- Tree planter
- Tree and shrub pruning equipment
- Fencing material & equipment
- Refrigerator in good working condition
- Floor jacks
- Welder
- Cutting torch

If you can help provide any of the above, please contact Chris Troendle by phone at (712) 684-2697 ext. 114 or email Chris at

landmanager@whiterockconservancy.org



Upcoming Events

September 13-16 10th Annual Star Party

(see pg. 3 for details)

October 25 Fall family hayrack rides - Bring your family out for our 2nd annual fall family get-together. There will be hayrack rides for kids of all ages, apple cider, and cookies.

November 2 and 3 Public Art for Rural Communities

Starting Friday afternoon, Whiterock will host art enthusiasts from around the region. The event will include a tour of town art. Stay over Saturday to start your holiday shopping at the Raccoon River Art Fair.

Starting early November Prescribed fire burns on the Prairie.

For more event details, check our website:

<http://www.whiterockconservancy.org>

Whiterock Conservancy is a Non Profit Land Trust

Whiterock Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) organization which has a mission to **connect people with our landscape.**

Whiterock needs your help in supporting our day-to-day land conservation and restoration mission as well as providing unique and low-cost, low-impact outdoor programs for people of all ages. We are also conducting a special capital campaign to raise \$900,000 to build an extraordinary 35-mile soft (natural) trail system that will provide far greater public access to Whiterock's landscapes.



Please make a donation to Whiterock today.

Tax-deductible donations can be made on-line at (look for the *Donate Now* button)

<http://www.whiterockconservancy.org>

or mailed to Whiterock Conservancy, 1390 Hwy 141, Coon Rapids, IA 50058.

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



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