



# openspaces

## Newsletter for Whiterock Conservancy

A Nonprofit Land Trust

### Introducing Conrad Kramer

Conrad began work at Whiterock Conservancy in April 2013 as our Executive Director. We're excited to have his expertise with land trusts and nonprofits. Conrad can be reached by phone at 712.684.2697 x111 and email: [conrad@whiterockconservancy.org](mailto:conrad@whiterockconservancy.org)

#### More about our new Executive Director:

Conrad Kramer comes to Coon Rapids from the Mojave Desert of Southern California. There he served as executive director of the Anza-Borrego Foundation, a nonprofit that worked to conserve wildlife habitat and support the recreational and public education mission of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. This park, at nearly 1,000 square miles, is the second largest state park in the nation.



Previous to this Conrad worked just west of Grand Teton National Park, where he served as executive director of the Teton

Regional Land Trust. This land trust worked to conserve critical wildlife habitat, prime agricultural lands, and important open space in the Upper Snake River Watershed adjacent to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Conrad and his family migrated west from Southwest Michigan and Northern Indiana where he spent much of his career as a nonprofit executive director in social services. Yet through all this Conrad kept his hand in conservation as well. As a volunteer he founded, and then led for ten years, a nonprofit organization that reforested private lands in Northern Indiana. He also worked for two years as a professional advocate for sustainable land-use in the cities of Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago in Northwest Indiana.

In 1985 Conrad earned a BS Degree from Indiana University in Public Affairs concentrating in Environmental Policy and Public Administration. He spent his early childhood in Latin America where

his father served as a diplomat in the Foreign Service. He spent his youth living in and exploring the forests and mountains of New Hampshire.

Conrad is coming to Iowa with his wife Lisa Gonzales-Kramer and their two sons, Erik and Leif, who are 18 and 15 respectively. Although they enjoyed their adventures out west, they are all happy to be returning to the Midwest.



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

[www.whiterockconservancy.org](http://www.whiterockconservancy.org)

Phone extensions:

x111 Conrad Kramer, Exec. Director  
x112 Guest Services  
x114 Chris Troendle, Land Manager  
x115 Development Office  
x117 April Schultes, Office Manager

### SPRING is in the AIR and SUMMER is just around the corner!

Have you scheduled your 2013 getaway?

At Whiterock Conservancy you can:

- \* Go for a hike, bike ride, or horseback ride (you bring the horse!) on miles of trails winding through woodlands, prairies, oak savanna, sandstone bluffs, and the Middle Raccoon River
- \* Rent a John Deere Gator to easily reach remote fishing ponds or hiking spots
- \* Schedule a half-day river trip by canoe or kayak
- \* See birds and other wild animals in their natural habitat
- \* Go fishing in a variety of ponds throughout the property
- \* Pack a picnic lunch and venture out to that perfect quiet locale
- \* Roast hot dogs and smore's over an open fire
- \* Schedule a tractor pulled hayrack ride
- \* Gaze at the multitude of stars overhead
- \* Visit the buffalo herd near the Historic Garst Farmhouse (we're expecting three babies this season!)

Whiterock is one of the most beautiful and inviting of Iowa's "Great Places" — and we're within a short drive between Des Moines, Ames, and Omaha. You could visit for the day or stay overnight as we have indoor lodging options and outdoor camping options.

You can make reservations online at [www.whiterockconservancy.org](http://www.whiterockconservancy.org) or contact us directly at 712-684-2964 ext. 112 or [guestinfo@whiterockconservancy.org](mailto:guestinfo@whiterockconservancy.org).

**We look forward to seeing you!**

**OUR THANKS** to Prairie Meadows for their \$5,000 grant award. Ken Herring, Whiterock Conservancy Board President, accepted the award. With Ken are Prairie Meadows representatives Paul Rogness, Mary Lynn Jones, Linda Grandquist, and Dolph Pulliam.



## ***A Wild Place Returns*** by Chris Troendle

Water quality in Iowa, and throughout the country, has been a topic of concern for a long time. Deforestation, poor farming practices, and pollution are among the contributing factors. However, in the last few years, with the help of organizations like the US Department of Agriculture, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Trees Forever, and local communities, there have been local success stories which are making a difference. Last year Whiterock Conservancy partnered with these organizations and developed a successful riparian buffer/tree planting project.

Nearly six thousand tree and shrub seedlings were planted by school children and community members on seven acres adjacent to the Middle Raccoon River. The land was open pasture in the Conservation Reserve Program. The partnership planted what will be a highly diverse natural area with fourteen varieties of trees and eight varieties of shrubs. As a riparian buffer helping to improve water quality, we included an annual rye and timothy seeding that, in the short term, will create a streamside buffer and enhance the aesthetics of the trail. The long term goal is to have a diverse stand of hard and soft wood trees, along with flowering and fruit bearing bushes and trees, that create lasting improvements in soil and water conservation and biodiversity. The area will also become a resource for community environmental education programs, fruit and nut gathering, and wildlife viewing.



Photo credit:  
April Schultes

The trees planted included Bur Oak, Buttonbush, Pin Oak, Dogwood, Red osier, Swamp White Oak, Elderberry, River Birch, Silver Maple, Sycamore, Willow, Kentucky Coffee, Black cherry, American Plum, Butternut, Arrow-wood, Hickory, Choke Cherry, Black

Walnut, Crabapple, and Hazelnut. As you can tell from the species listed, one of the objectives of this planting is to create a human and wildlife friendly area.

Much of the area is slowly converting back to the wild with some native plants returning on their own. Plantings of this scale create complex ecosystems that blend the topography and soils of an area with plant and animal communities that can live together in a stable relationship. We have seen a number of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and insects return to colonize what is quickly becoming a hospitable environment again. The process can be complex and requires time and patience. Also, it is difficult to develop an ecosystem on an area that has been managed poorly for a long period of time. Yet we are very pleased to be able to report that we have an estimated seventy five percent survival rate even after the 2012 drought and a difficult winter. Please come see what we have done to make Iowa a better place, and keep in mind that patience will bring all things together.



Photo credit:  
April Schultes

This project was made possible with support from the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Carroll County Conservation, Global Youth Service Day Grant, Trees Forever, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Future Farmers of America, the Coon Rapids/Bayard Unified School District, and the community of Coon Rapids. Many thanks to all our partners and volunteers that made this project a success. We at Whiterock look forward to working with all these partners in the future as we seek to nurture all our lands to the peak of vitality.



## ***A Chance to GROW*** by Logan Kelly -Coon Rapid-Bayard FFA Reporter

Late in the fall of 2011, the Coon Rapids Bayard FFA Chapter learned that the Hanlon FFA farm northeast of Coon Rapids was sold and was going to be torn down. The chapter had signed a 10 year easement and had previously invested in the drilling of a new well and restoring the electrical service to the farm buildings. New steel was put on the roof of the south hog barn and paint was applied to the same building, many grants were written to try to restore/preserve the old hay barn on the acreage, with little success. After six years the agreement was broken and this appeared to be a setback to the local chapter because chapter members who lived with-in the city limits could not raise animals for their Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) projects. The former FFA farm allowed members to raise a wide variety of animals which included: pigs, sheep, goats, and poultry.



Photo credit:  
Logan Kelly

A majority of current FFA members do not live on a farm or acreage that would allow them the opportunity to raise animals to exhibit at local and state fairs. This unique opportunity gave members a chance to earn money while gaining experience in production agriculture and developing skills which transfer to careers in Agriculture. This year, the National FFA Organization has been using the theme *GROW* as their national slogan.

After losing the Hanlon FFA Farm, the hunt for a new farm began last winter and spring. With the help of chapter advisor Jim Heithoff the members began making phone calls to form a new partnership. After many attempts to find a place for students to raise

livestock, Chris Troendle of Whiterock Conservancy offered the chapter the use of a livestock barn on the Garst Farm. At the monthly chapter meeting, members brought the matter to the floor. After a great amount of discussion, the chapter approved the new FFA farm at the Garst Farm. The only stipulation was that chapter members would work to replace broken boards and paint the building.



Photo credit:  
Sandy Grace

The chapter does not pay for rent, electricity, or water as long as they make improvements and paint the old barn. Students soon moved their projects into the barn after making pens and bringing in the necessary equipment needed for their swine and poultry projects. The students who had livestock projects last summer included Marissa Donahue, Jerome Boblett, Logan Kelly, Justin Boblett, and Jake Andersen. The students were very grateful to have a barn to raise animals.



Photo credit:  
Sandy Grace

Even though the barn had been vacant for the winter months, the chapter has constructed a sheep pen and is planning to move in another set of pigs and chickens to the barn the beginning of May. A few students are exploring the possibility of sheep and goat projects. This year fifteen students plan to use the farm for SAE projects. The FFA sincerely appreciates the use of the facilities

provided by the Whiterock Conservancy and hopes the partnership will continue to provide an opportunity for students to *GROW* for many years to come.

In addition to the FFA partnership with Whiterock Conservancy, the chapter also farms crop ground in partnership with the Carroll County Conservation Board and the Glidden-Ralston FFA Chapter (42 acres), Halverson Farms (9 acres), and Tiefenthaler Ag-Supply (4 acres). These combined experiences allow our Coon Rapids-Bayard FFA members to *GROW* and develop their interests in Agriculture and hopefully someday choose to come back to Western Iowa to work and raise their families.



1390 Highway 141  
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Spring 2013



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### Upcoming Events

**June 8** — River Clean up (weather permitting)  
**July 4-7** — Coon Rapids Sesquicentennial Celebration  
**July 10-14** — Carroll County Fair  
(fairgrounds in Coon Rapids)  
**July 12-13** — Whiterock  
Conservancy BioBlitz  
**July 19** — Whiterock River Float  
**August 29-September 2** — Annual  
Star Party  
**August 30** — Star Party Public  
Viewing Night



For more event details, and weather related announcements as they affect outdoor programs, check our website and FB pages:

<http://www.whiterockconservancy.org>  
<https://www.facebook.com/whiterock.conservancy>

### You Make the Difference!

Whiterock Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust established to protect and steward more than 5,000 acres of irreplaceable Iowa river-valley land. Your gift is extremely important to Whiterock because it provides resources that make an immediate impact. Whether you make an annual, monthly, tribute or memorial contribution - your gift supports Whiterock's efforts to create a rich natural and farmed landscape to be enjoyed by both nature and people along the Middle Raccoon River Valley.



Tax-deductible donations can be made on-line at (see the blue *Donate Now* button) <http://www.whiterockconservancy.org> or mailed to Whiterock Conservancy, 1390 Hwy 141, Coon Rapids, IA 50058.

*Thank You for Your Support!*

If you prefer to receive your newsletter electronically, please let us know at [april@whiterockconservancy.org](mailto:april@whiterockconservancy.org).