

WHITEROCK CONSERVANCY



EXPANDING ACCESS: WHITEROCK'S SUSTAINABLE SOFT TRAILS PROJECT

People learn to appreciate wild spaces by being out in them and no trail experience is more intimate with nature than single track—a narrow ribbon of dirt that puts a habitat's stimulations within easy reach.

— Ryan Hanser
International Mountain Bicycling Association

Whiterock Conservancy

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Whiterock Conservancy

Dear Friend,

Imagine walking, biking, or going on a horseback ride on a trail that winds through unbroken expanses of natural and rural landscapes, past unique whiterock bluffs and geological formations dating back 105 million years. Along the way, you enjoy a gorgeous landscape that is a mix of rolling pastures, oak savannas, timber, native and restored prairies, wetlands, fishing ponds, and crop grounds—diverse habitats that are critical to hundreds of species of birds, mammals, and other wildlife. Imagine, too, following that trail to the farmhouse made famous as the home of Roswell Garst, one of our nation's hybrid seed pioneers who hosted Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev during Khrushchev's historic 1959 trip to the United States. And envision being able to experience these irreplaceable parts of Iowa's history and landscape as an important part of a growing statewide trail system.

All of this happens every day just 60 miles upstream of the Des Moines metro area. Whiterock Conservancy is a non-profit land trust that was formed six years ago to protect and manage nearly seven square miles of the scenic Middle Raccoon River Valley. Whiterock provides experiences like these to visitors from Iowa and around the world.

Whiterock's vision is to be a place of farmed and natural landscapes, healthy waters, fun in the wild, and innovative ideas. Our mission is to engage the public with a resilient natural and farmed landscape and develop full understanding of its value. This work will involve preserving and creating a diversity of habitats and developing a variety of ways for the public to interact with Whiterock's unique landscape, its history, and the outdoors.



In the six short years that we have been in existence, Whiterock has made tremendous progress in protecting and restoring the land and creating a destination for hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders. During this time Whiterock has:

- opened our Bur Oak Visitor Center, with its stunning view of the valley and year-round access to more than 30 miles of trails;
- built a \$1.7 million hard-surface trail joining the Garst Farm and its ponds and wetlands with the Coon Rapids business district;

- installed hundreds of new signs to help visitors navigate and learn about the landscape;
- hosted free or low-cost public events, including bluegrass concerts, agricultural field days, river clean-ups, wild bird releases, and the annual “Iowa Star Party” (astronomer gathering);
- built a handicap-accessible fishing pier at the Garst Farm pond;
- hosted a state-wide celebration of the 50th anniversary of Premier Khrushchev’s visit to Iowa that included the presence of more than 30 Russian dignitaries and listing the Roswell and Elizabeth Garst Farmstead on the National Register of Historic Places;
- protected and restored more than 140 acres of rare oak savanna with ongoing management and the use of clearing and annual prairie and timber burns;
- improved the health of the soil in selected row crop fields by planting cover crops and by introducing rotational grazing on more than 700 acres of pasture;
- undertook extensive inventories of the area’s unique plant communities, bird populations, dragonflies, etc., and
- monitored changes in the quality of the land, water and wildlife through the use of volunteers in our new Land Stewardship Program.



With our successes and the basic infrastructure in place, Whiterock is now poised to open our vast landscape and all it has to offer to people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests through the most unique and ecologically friendly trail system in the entire state!

Please read the next few pages to learn more about this exciting soft trails project and then join us and make a special gift to Whiterock to make it a reality!

Ken Herring

President, Whiterock Conservancy

Our goals

As children and adults spend more time indoors, lured by glowing screens and the hum of technology, too few of us are getting outside to explore the natural environment and learn its important lessons. People learn to appreciate and value wild spaces by being out on the land.

Whiterock's new trail system will offer the general public—from across Iowa, the Midwest, the nation, and abroad—the opportunity to discover and enjoy some of the largest unbroken natural and farmed landscapes in the state. People of all ages and with different physical abilities will be able to safely explore the variety and richness of the different environments, the diversity of plant and animal life, and learn about land conservation and sustainable agriculture.



Unique and cutting-edge

- Whiterock's new trail system will be the **first large-scale, purpose-built soft (natural surface) trail in Iowa** designed and constructed for the enjoyment and specific needs of horseback riders, mountain bikers, hikers, and cross-country skiers.
- *Sections of our trail will also accommodate low-powered electric carts for people who are physically challenged or have infants and young children.*
- **The new trail system will be routed past numerous destination points**—scenic views, historic sites, geological features, agricultural areas, etc., and will offer numerous environmental learning opportunities.

- **Cutting-edge design and construction techniques** pioneered by the International Mountain Bicycling Association on “singletrack” portions of the trail will minimize soil erosion and habitat disruption while ensuring trail safety and user satisfaction.
- *Whiterock’s soft trails project also has a **first-of-its-type-in-the-nation research component**. In-depth environmental and physical surveys are being completed before construction begins and we will do regular monitoring of the trail and trail users after construction has been completed to learn more about how the trail impacts the natural environment.*
- The newly-constructed or restored trails will form a network more than 28 miles in length that will provide enough diverse experiences and destinations to create a meaningful multi-day experience for visitors.
- ***Cost per mile of singletrack soft trails is roughly 15% of the cost of typical hard surface trail construction.***
- Long-term maintenance costs will be minimized by the state-of-the-art trail design, a detailed trail monitoring program, and selected user fees to achieve economic as well as environmental sustainability.
- *Collaborations with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service, Iowa contractors, and the trail community will help this innovative project influence future soft trail design in Iowa.*

With the new trails network in place, Whiterock will have the environmental, scenic, recreational, and historical attributes and trails needed for it to become a premier eco-tourism destination serving all of Iowa and the Midwest.



Project Timeline

Trail design and the baseline environmental, archaeological, and geological surveys were completed during the summer and fall of 2011. This information is being used to design the entire trail system. Ecological studies will continue in the planned trail corridor in the spring and summer of 2012, with additional ecological survey work planned for 2013.

Trail construction will begin in late summer of 2013 and the public will be able to use the trails for the first time during the fall of 2013. The trail designers will monitor the use, make any corrections needed, and the trails will officially open in the spring of 2014.



Project Budget

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|---|--------------------|
| <u>Trail Access and Construction</u> | \$1,084,450 |
| <i>Pre-construction planning and engineering; trail easements; improvements to access the road for emergency and maintenance equipment; trail construction and contingency</i> | |
| <u>Scientific Assessments, Inventories, and Monitoring</u> | \$192,487 |
| <i>Archaeological and environmental impact assessments; baseline inventories for long-term environmental, archaeological, and geological monitoring; Research Fund for ongoing monitoring of trail impact on the land and wildlife</i> | |
| <u>River & Stream Access & Protection</u> | \$166,750 |
| <i>Construction of armored approaches to the river; streambank restoration; trailside savanna and prairie restoration; landscaping and tree planting at trail heads</i> | |
| <u>Signage</u> | \$60,000 |
| <i>Way-finding, usage, and safety signage; educational signs; equipment to create additional signs as needed</i> | |
| <u>Trail Enhancements and Amenities</u> | \$82,800 |
| <i>Composting toilet; learning course for mountain bikers; wildlife viewing platforms and blinds; wilderness campsites with access trails; electric golf carts for access for the physically challenged, families with young children, volunteers, and maintenance staff</i> | |
| <u>Trail Outreach and Education Program</u> | \$107,180 |
| <i>Program for marketing the new trails; development of a web-based 3D tour of the trails; expansion of the volunteer program; van for carrying visitors, volunteers, researchers, and staff; Trail Design Conference to share information on the effectiveness of the new trail design techniques and scientific studies</i> | |
| <u>Trail Maintenance Program</u> | \$150,000 |
| <i>Purchase of equipment and hand tools to maintain the trails; Maintenance Reserve Fund for long-term maintenance of the trails</i> | |
| <u>Project Management and Grant Administration</u> | \$125,926 |
| TOTAL PROJECT COST | \$1,969,593 |

How YOU Can Help

The first phases of the project have been funded through two federal transportation grants and private donations. To date, we have raised \$1.2 million representing 61% of project costs. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is providing technical assistance and financial oversight. The National Park Service is also providing technical assistance.

To realize our dream of providing greater public access to one of Iowa's most unique natural environments, Whiterock must raise an additional \$762,068 in private donations.

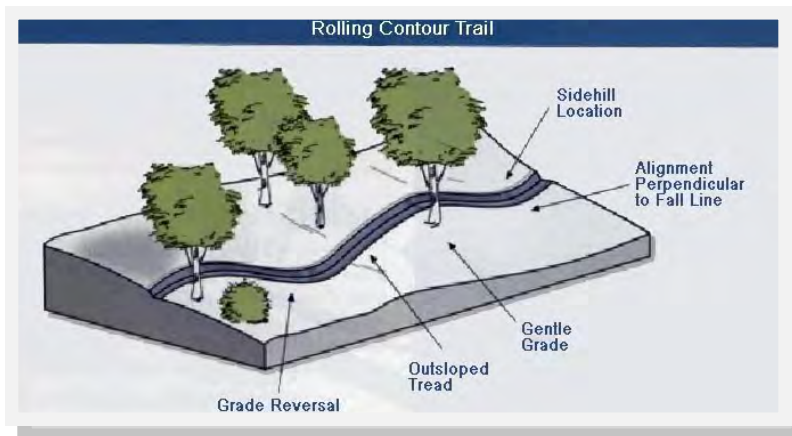
We invite you to support this ground-breaking initiative. Your donation will help bring cutting-edge trail design to the task of opening new areas of Iowa's natural and historic landscape to hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, and the physically challenged.

Critical components that still need funding include:

- trail construction
- wilderness campsites
- electric carts for use by the physically-challenged and young families
- a learning course for mountain bikers
- development of new education and outreach programs
- a research fund for long-term environmental, geologic, and ecological monitoring, and
- a maintenance reserve fund for long-term maintenance of the trails and habitats.

Our future as a people is tied closely to our relationship with nature. Your gift will be put to work opening Whiterock's uniquely wild Iowa landscape and all it has to offer to people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests as they interact with this special wild place. Donations to Whiterock's Sustainable Soft Trail Project are an investment in the future. Won't you please join us?





Naming Opportunities

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|---|----------------|
| Double-Track Trail Segments (3 available) | \$100,000 each |
| Single-Track Trail Segments (2 available) | \$100,000 each |
| Research Fund | \$90,000 |
| Singletrack Horse and Pedestrian Trails (5 available) | \$50,000 each |
| Shorter Single and Doubletrack Trail Sections (4 available) | \$25,000 each |
| Interpretive signs along the trail | \$30,000 |
| Van for Use for Programs, Volunteers, Maintenance | \$20,000 |
| Boardwalk to Wetlands Viewing Area | \$15,000 |
| Streambank Restoration Sites (3 available) | \$12,500 each |
| Electric Carts (2) | \$12,500 each |
| Wildlife Viewing Areas (5) | \$1,000 each |
| Wilderness Campsites (4) | \$1,000 each |
| Trail Conference | \$10,000 |
| Mini-dozer & Tractor for Trail Maintenance | \$40,000 |

To discuss these naming opportunities or if you have questions about the project, please contact:

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Whiterock Conservancy

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Singletrack demands the trail user's attention. A narrow path with natural contours challenges people to absorb the countless cues in their environment—soil, vegetation, wildlife, and other natural resources that present in a way not found on wider gravel or paved corridors.

*- Ryan Hanser
International Mountain Bicycling Association*



Full scale environmental restoration, progressive agricultural management, AND destination-quality recreation—all overlapping on the same acreage—will truly provide a 21st-century model of land management.

*-Scott Linnenburger, Trail Designer
Principal, KAY-LINN enterprises*