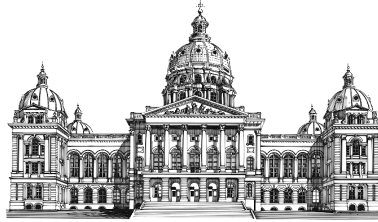

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State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319
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Banner Wildlife Management Area Update

ISSUE

This *Issue Review* provides an update on the renovation of the Banner Wildlife Management Area.

AFFECTED AGENCIES

Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

CODE AUTHORITY

Section 481A.5, Code of Iowa

BACKGROUND

The Banner Wildlife Management Area consists of 222 acres that was purchased by the DNR in 1954. Prior to the purchase, the land was mined for coal. The Area is located between Des Moines and Indianola on Highway 65/69 and it is estimated that 16,000 vehicles drive by the Area each day.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Summerset Bike Trail is located in the Banner Wildlife Management Area and is the midway point between the cities of Indianola and Carlisle. The Warren County Conservation Board manages the Trail, which was established in 2001.

There are a number of ponds located at the Area that vary in size, with the largest encompassing 59 acres. Hunting seasons at the Area include deer, squirrel, and rabbit. The Area also has an unsupervised shooting range that is located near the bike trail and there have been concerns for the safety of people walking and riding bicycles. All of these sporting activities have attracted people to the Area, however, the numbers are limited due to limited road access and minimal parking.

Since the Area has no enforcement staff, a number of unfavorable activities have taken place in the Area, such as gatherings of people using drugs and alcohol, methamphetamine laboratories, unauthorized disposal of appliances and other large waste items, and general destruction of property. Currently, State and county enforcement officers have been responding to the complaints.

The DNR began planning the renovation of the Banner Wildlife Management Area in 2002. The purpose of the renovation was to create a viable recreation area offering a variety of activities to encourage additional people to use the Area. Upon completion of the renovation, the Area will be renamed in order to create a new identity, and the DNR will provide full-time seasonal enforcement staff to discourage unfavorable activities.



Banner Wildlife Management Area Fishing Pond
Source: Department of Natural Resources

PLANNED RENOVATIONS

When the renovation is completed, new recreational activities will include:

- A paved entrance road will be added that will be located throughout the Area for easy public access. The road will be 20-feet wide and will have two four-foot bike lanes on each side. The goal is to encourage drivers and bicyclists to drive and ride through the entire Area as it provides a scenic route.
- The main entrance will have stone portals added to draw attention to the Area as people drive by each day.
- Picnic areas will be added near the larger fishing pond to encourage people to have family picnics and other functions.
- A two-mile paved scenic bicycle loop will be added to the Area. This will be connected to the existing Summerset Bike Trail and provide bicyclists with an alternative route through a natural setting.
- A 10-car parking lot located near the Summerset Bike Trail with restroom facilities and a water fountain will be added to encourage people on the bicycle trail to stop and take a break.
- Three miles of mountain bike trails will be constructed through 88 acres of land. There are a limited number of these trails near Des Moines and local mountain bicyclist groups will assist in the development of the trail.
- Boat ramps will be added at the two largest fishing ponds to provide easy access to the water. The DNR will provide an annual fish assessment of the Area, and will provide stock if it is determined that the natural population is insufficient. The stocked habitat will include trout, which will make the site the only central Iowa trout fishery.
- A paved parking lot will be added near each boat ramp to provide a safe place for anglers to park vehicles while fishing.

- The existing shooting range will be completely renovated, and will have posted operating hours and a gated entrance to increase the security of the Area. A target holding system will be implemented to discourage users from shooting undesirable targets.
- A concessionaire will operate the shooting range and a snack bar. The snack bar will encourage bicyclists to stop in the Area.
- An earthen berm and natural buffer strip will be developed between the shooting range and the bicycle trail to reduce the noise level from the shooting range and to enhance the natural scenery.

BUDGET IMPACT

The estimated cost for the renovation of the Banner Wildlife Management Area is \$1.3 million. The funding has been secured for the majority of the project. The following table provides a breakdown of the expenditures and the associated funding source.

Project	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Road paving & bike lanes	\$ 810,000	Parks and Institutions Fund
Entrance parking lot	25,000	Resource Enhancement and Protection Fund (REAP)
Two single lane boat ramps & parking	100,000	Marine Fuel Tax
Two modern unisex restrooms	50,000	REAP
Stone entrance portals	25,000	REAP
Shooting range and concession area	200,000	REAP
Shooting range and concession parking	30,000	REAP -- \$15,000, and \$15,000 is not secured
Shooting range roadway	45,000	Parks and Institutions Fund
Total Project Cost	\$1,285,000	

Both boat ramps have been completed and the parking lots near the ramps are being rocked. These will be included in the road-paving project and the contract will be finalized during November 2003. The contract for the restrooms, stone entrance portals, shooting range, and concession stand will be finalized in December 2003.

The DNR plans to rename the Area during summer 2004 when all projects have been completed. Enforcement staff will be added at that time.

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