

F I N A L R E P O R T
LAND RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

Senator James Riordan, Co-chairperson
Representative Paul Johnson, Co-chairperson

Submitted to the General Assembly

March 1989

Prepared by the Legislative Service Bureau

FINAL REPORT
LAND RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

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AVAILABILITY OF MINUTES AND SUMMARIES

In regard to the meetings and public hearings of the study committee, the minutes of such meetings and the summaries of such public hearings are available from the Legislative Service Bureau.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Land Resource Conservation and Management Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council and directed to conduct public hearings to gather information to aid in the development of Iowa's land conservation and management agenda between now and the year 2000, including public response about balancing Iowans needs and expectations from state natural resources with the state's land stewardship obligation, resource protection, and enhancement. The Study Committee was directed to report its findings to the Legislative Council. The Study Committee was granted four meeting days for the public hearings. The public hearings were held on October 11, November 16 and 17, and November 21, 1988. The Study Committee also held a brief, informal meeting on January 12, 1989, to discuss any conclusions derived from the public hearings and make recommendations.

Members of the Study Committee were:

Senator James Riordan, Co-chairperson
Representative Paul W. Johnson, Co-chairperson
Senator Alvin Miller
Senator Berl Priebe
Senator Norman Goodwin
Senator Jack Hester
Senator Kenneth Scott
Senator Wilmer Rensink
Representative Dennis May
Representative David Schrader
Representative Marvin Diemer
Representative Andy McKean
Representative Dennis Black
Representative Bill Royer

OCTOBER 11 MEETING

At its first meeting, the study committee received testimony from the principal state agencies and divisions having responsibilities for natural resource programs, land, and facilities and from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources relating to an innovative conservation reserve program named Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM). Mr. Greg Larson, Program Supervisor,

described the background and status of the RIM program and two proposed constitutional amendments on the November, 1988 ballot to create a trust fund for environmental, natural resource, and wildlife purposes and one to authorize a state lottery, part of the proceeds of which will fund the trust fund. The RIM program is designed to purchase easements on marginal crop land so that it is retired from crop production. Currently, only general revenue bonds are authorized for the program, but this means of funding is not considered satisfactory for the long term. Approximately, twenty thousand acres of land has been retired under the RIM program.

The Study Committee also heard from Robert Fagerland, Deputy Director, Department of Natural Resources, who outlined the overall mission of the Department to manage, protect, conserve, and develop Iowa's natural resources. This includes long-term protection and management of forest resources, wildlife habitat, park and recreation areas, state preserves, lakes, and lake watersheds. The Department manages 350,000 acres and stresses a multiple-use management philosophy. All publicly owned lands in Iowa constitute only 1.7 percent of the total land resources in the state. Chapter 111E directs the Department to plan for the acquisition and protection of open spaces in Iowa equal to 10 percent of the land area by the year 2000. This would equal approximately 3,000,000 acres. Concerning funding, the Department estimates the availability of \$27,000,000 per year for the next five years for infrastructure needs, and facilities and resources already developed, but this will be \$8,000,000 per year short of the needs for those facilities.

The Study Committee also heard from Mr. Bill Crews, State Director of the Iowa Nature Conservancy, who presented the recommendations of the Iowa Resources Enhancement Program Conservation Alliance. The Alliance includes most of the conservation, outdoor recreation, and environmental organizations in the state. The Alliance program would cost approximately \$30,000,000 per year of additional expenditures to implement.

James B. Gulliford, Director of the Soil Conservation Division, Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, described the activities of his Division and mentioned some areas which will require future attention. There is a need for increased support for soil conservation programs, erosion control practices, wind erosion, regulation of sand and gravel operations, fall tillage, and farm chemical residues. He also expressed the frustrations of the Division from the lack of cooperation from the Agricultural Stabilization, and Conservation Service in maintaining standards at a level consistent with adequate protection of Iowa's soil and water resources.

Mr. Darrell Frey, Director of the Laboratory Division of the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, spoke on the

activities of his Division regarding the implementation of the Groundwater Protection Act. With regard to fertilizers, all known dealers have been licensed, required fees assessed, and additional tonnage tax imposed on nitrogen portions. With respect to pesticides, requirements relating to examination, certification, and licensing of applicators have been met. Pesticide product registration fees have been collected also.

NOVEMBER 16 MEETING

The November 16 meeting commenced at 2:00 p.m. in Onawa, Iowa, with a briefing and tour of the Loess Hills State Historic Forest by Mr. Mike Carrier and Mr. Bill Farris, Department of Natural Resources. The Loess Hills State Historic Forest consists of three main parcels of forest land and prairie in Monona and Harrison counties. Currently, the state forest includes approximately 4,000 total acres, but when all designated lands are acquired, the forest will include approximately 17,000 acres.

At the public hearing held in the evening at the West Monona High School Auditorium in Onawa, the participants were asked to respond to one or more of the following questions regarding the state's natural resources:

1. Should the state acquire more natural and historic land resources? If so, which types? (parks, lakes, wetlands, fragile lands, preserves, natural historic landmarks, recreation areas, etc.)

2. Should priority be given to acquisition of additional land resources or to development or maintenance of existing land resources?

3. What should be the state's role in soil conservation?

4. If you advocate additional state expenditures for land conservation and management programs, what should be the source or sources of the additional funds?

At the first public hearing, nine persons presented testimony from among twenty persons who attended. The testimony urged acquisition of additional wetlands, fragile or highly erodible lands, and forests; strong state support of soil conservation efforts; additional state general fund support for Department programs along with private support from Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, and similar organizations. Support was also heard for the state's goal of having 10% of Iowa's land within the public open space program by the year 2000. Public funding to match private contributions for the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture was urged and support for the continued use of lottery proceeds for the purchase of loess hills forestry lands was voiced.

NOVEMBER 17 MEETING

During the morning and afternoon of November 17, the study committee members received briefings and tours of the Shimon Marsh in Pocahontas County by Ben Van Gundy and Anita O'Gara representing the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and agricultural drainage wells in the Gilmore City area by area farmers. In addition, the Committee and other interested persons had a luncheon meeting with agricultural producers who are participating in research and demonstration projects to promote conservation tillage and nonpoint sources of pollution control practices. The projects are funded by the Soil Conservation Division of the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. During the evening public hearing at the Gilmore City-Bradgate High School Auditorium, twenty-three persons presented testimony to the Committee. More than 125 persons attended the public hearing. The testimony urged support for the plans of the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture to purchase 30,000 acres of wetlands for waterfowl habitation during the next fifteen years. Several speakers expressed concern with the possibility of closing agricultural drainage wells and sinkholes in the Pocahontas County area and the social and economic costs involved. Support was given to provide tax incentives to keep Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands from returning to row crop production. Additional attention to forest preservation and reforestation programs was suggested. Also, opposing arguments were voiced concerning the development of a six hundred acre lake at the Brush Creek State Recreation Area.

NOVEMBER 21 MEETING

During the afternoon of November 21, the Committee toured the Mines of Spain Natural Historic area near Dubuque, the Green Island State Wildlife area, and Brown's Lake, the latter two areas located approximately ten miles south of Bellevue, Iowa. The Committee received a briefing on the development plans for the Mines of Spain Natural Historic area and the financial situation causing a hold on plans for the Green Island State Wildlife area.

At the evening public hearing held in the Bellevue Community Center, the Committee heard testimony from ten persons from among approximately forty persons who attended the hearing. The participants urged the acquisition of additional wetlands for waterfowl and related wildlife. One participant argued for more care and maintenance of current properties before any additional land is acquired. Opposition to the development of a lake on Brush Creek Recreational Area and the development of a planned road access to the Mines of Spain area was heard. The acquisition of additional natural areas, particularly of wooded corridors along rivers and streams, was urged to preserve the areas and to prevent further erosion and deterioration of river and stream banks.

JANUARY 12 MEETING

On January 12, the Committee held a brief, informal meeting to discuss the issues and impressions raised by the participants in the meetings and public hearings held in October and November. After discussion, the Committee made two recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are as follows:

1. That a state natural resource fund be established to fund a ten-year natural resource enhancement program including, but not limited to, the restoration and maintenance of state natural resource properties, the acquisition and maintenance, by gift, purchase, or easement, of natural resources for parks, lakes, wetlands, fragile (highly erodible) lands, native prairies, recreation areas, natural historic landmarks, preserves, and other resources to meet the year 2000 open space goals, soil conservation programs and projects, and the replacement of certain property tax dollars lost to local governments if warranted after a cost benefit analysis of the public project involved.

2. That the state natural resource fund receive the receipts of one-third of the state's share of lottery proceeds each year for ten years and the proceeds from new taxes, fees or funding sources such as abandoned mandatory deposits, which are dedicated to the fund.

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