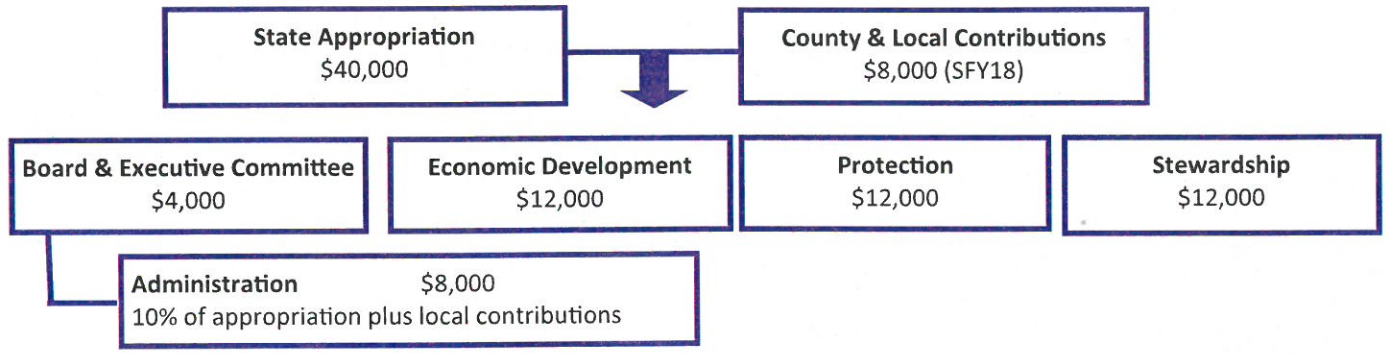


Executive Committee Summary

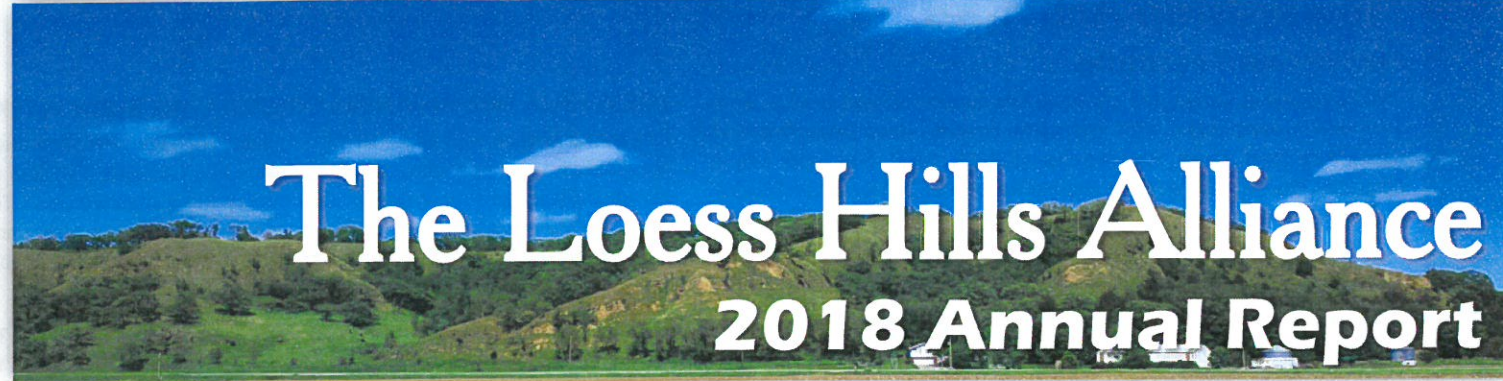
The Loess Hills Alliance Executive Committee provides leadership to the Board of Directors and ensures that funds appropriated through state funding are leveraged with other sources and used wisely. The most successful use of those funds has included partnering with other organizations, farmers and private land owners to leverage the dollars for the best possible, mutually beneficial outcome within the Loess Hills.

In 2017, the State appropriation to the Loess Hills Alliance was significantly decreased from an historical annual award of \$150,000 to \$40,000. This decrease has significantly impacted the collective ability to support our three objective areas of stewardship, protection and economic development for the region.

The 2018 funds were distributed as follows:



The Loess Hills Alliance has matched state appropriated funds for projects at rates from 3:1 to 35:1. Since SFY2013, the Alliance has supported and leveraged more than \$3 million in projects and resources toward the Loess Hills Region.



Our Mission
The Loess Hills Alliance strives to protect special natural and cultural resources while ensuring the economic viability and private property rights of the region through the creation of a common vision for Iowa's Loess Hills.

- A region where ...**
- The unique land formation, culture, and history of the hills are conserved for future generations
 - Areas of special interest are protected from development, soil mining, soil erosion and other visually disruptive activities
 - Awareness and educational opportunities are promoted about the unique nature of the region
 - Vegetation is managed to encourage native plant and wildlife communities, such as prairie, savanna and oak woodlands
 - Regional recreational opportunities and tourism attractions exist and public areas are expanded
 - References and resources are available to landowners interested in protecting features on their land
 - Local businesses and rural communities are supported



Executive Committee

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rich Pope, Chair | Patty McCall, Secretary | Graham McGaffin, At Large |
| Robert Benton, Vice Chair | Renea Anderson, Treasurer | Tammy Bramley, At Large |
| | | Dawn Snyder, At Large |

2018 Board of Directors

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Plymouth County
Nick Beeck
John Meis
Gary Horton | Monona County
Patty McCall
Tammy Bramley
Alan Dale | Pottawattamie County
Scott Belt
Jeff Franco
Mark Shoemaker | Fremont County
Robert Benton
Earl "Speck" Hendrickson |
| Woodbury County
Dawn Snyder
Rocky DeWitt
Rich Pope | Harrison County
Scott Pape
John Straight
Linda Herman | Mills County
Lonnie Mayberry
Gary Liebsch
Jerad Getter | |

- LHDCA Appointees**
- | | |
|---|---|
| Brett Bengard, Iowa Division of Soil Conservation | Whitney Reimers, Iowa Bankers Association |
| Renea Anderson, Western Iowa Tourism Region | Michelle Wodtke Franks, Golden Hills RC&D |
| Graham McGaffin, The Nature Conservancy | Ed Cambridge, Iowa Realtors Association |
| Jeff Seago, Iowa Department of Natural Resources | |

Executive Summary

In 2018, the Executive Committee of the Loess Hills Alliance pursued the following activities:

Magnolia city well project

The LHA protection committee received a grant application for funds to address an emergency issue that the city of Magnolia faced in 2018. The community's wells and water system had degraded to the point that water distributed in the city was becoming fouled with sediment in homes, and the water volume and pressure limited emergency needs for fire protection in the surrounding fire district. Because of the immediate needs, and that the city and fire district is one of the few communities located entirely in the Loess Hills landform, the executive committee decided to grant \$12,000 to Magnolia to get wells back in service. The rest of the water system was upgraded through a USDA rural grant and with community funding. Although this is a one-time, emergency grant, the LHA has noted that aging water supply infrastructure in small Iowa towns is a growing concern.

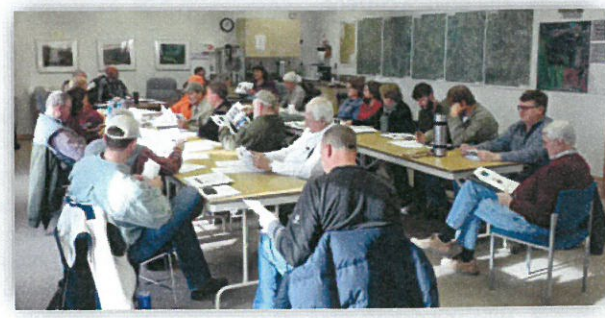


Fee title land acquisition moratorium

One of the functions of the Loess Hills Alliance Board included in the Iowa Code (chapter 161D, 6 1c) is "To study different options for the protection and preservation of significant historic, scenic, geologic, and recreational areas of the loess hills including but not limited to a federal or state park, preserve, or monument designation, fee title acquisition, or restrictive easement." [emphasis added]. Under this clause the protection committee has, from time to time, allocated some funds contributing to the acquisition of projects deemed appropriate for preservation of generally small tracts in concert with larger partnering groups. However, the perception has arisen that acquisition has been the major focus of LHA state funds, although that is not accurate. **Nonetheless, in response to concerns, the Executive Committee moved to suspend the use of monies for fee title acquisition so that we might garner continuing support for the other activities the Alliance is involved with.**

Friends of the Loess Hills State Forest

The Loess Hills State Forest is a major public resource in the central reach of the Loess Hills landform in Monona and Harrison Counties. Recently, a small group of volunteers have sought to organize as a "friends" group to support activities in the forest and the associated Preparation Canyon State Park. Under Iowa DNR guidance, "friends" groups have some clear guidelines in order to organize. One of these is to establish tax-exempt status under Federal IRS guidelines, which requires some legal costs and, importantly, time. Upon comparison, the mission of a Friends of the Loess Hills State Forest is compatible with the mission of the LHA, which has tax-exempt 501c(3) status. Accordingly, the LHA is in final stages of hosting the Friends group, effectively as a committee that will raise funds and coordinate volunteer activities with the State Forest. This activity should be finalized in the early months of 2019.



Stewardship Activities

PRIVATE LANDS POSITIONS

The Stewardship Committee continued its support of two private lands positions in partnership with Pheasants Forever, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. These positions are based in local USDA offices, and provide technical assistance to private landowners and producers on conservation planning and implementation.

Nic Salick is housed in Logan, covering Harrison, Monona, and Pottawattamie Counties. Jake Holt is housed in Sidney, covering Fremont, Mills, Montgomery and Page Counties. These biologists deliver technical assistance, and work to find landowners financial assistance through the federal farm bill as well as other state and local programs. Our private lands staff assisted landowners and the public in the Loess Hills region as follows in FY18:

- 960 acres added to the Iowa Habitat and Access Program.
- 81 acres of wetland restorations, habitat buffers, pollinator habitat and more.
- Landowner contacts, 208 in total
- 33 public programs and outreach events



LOESS HILLS PRAIRIE SEMINAR SPONSORSHIP

The Stewardship Committee continued support for the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar, this year celebrating its 42nd year. The Seminar is a 3-day event held the first week of June annually in Monona County. The event is one of the premier educational events that promotes stewardship and awareness of the unique resources presented in Iowa's Loess Hills. Approximately 180 people attended, including biologists, land owners and other interested visitors from nearby, Eastern Iowa and out-of-staters. Sessions included botanical and faunal surveys, understanding the soil resources in the hills, cultural history of the Loess Hills, and discussions of challenges landowners face in the hills. Through the seminar, the LHA Stewardship Committee sponsorship continues the effective leverage of funding with partners including Loess Hills County Conservation Boards, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Prairie Network, Izaak Walton League, NW Iowa Audubon Society, and the Iowa DNR. and private citizens.

THE LOESS HILLS NATURE SCHOOL

Since 2016, the Loess Hills Alliance Stewardship Committee has provided financial support for the Loess Hills Nature School. The School provides educators and private volunteers from Fremont County north to Woodbury County with skills to promote understanding of how ecosystems work, while appreciating connections with production agriculture and existing industries in the Loess Hills. Participants engage in promoting citizen science programs to engage the public in the Loess Hills and neighboring areas.

LOESS HILLS FIRE PARTNERS COOPERATIVE BURN WEEK

Fire is one of the most effective and available management techniques for grassland management, including prairie and pastures. Farmers are increasingly asked to use fire for CRP mid-contract management. That said, liability represented by off-site movement and issues with smoke is a significant issue that requires training and knowledge to employ fire management.

The Cooperative Burn Week was held March 19—23, 2018. The coordinated effort allowed multiple agencies and interest groups in the Loess Hills to pursue fire management efforts. The week provides opportunities for partners to collaborate, share fire line skills, and pursue advanced training. The Loess Hills encompass the largest



remaining prairie area in Iowa including many privately owned grasslands and pastures, this creates unique situations where extra management resources and personnel are needed for stewardship of the resource. The LHA Stewardship Committee provided nearly \$4000 to support the Burn Week efforts, predominantly to pay for Conservation Corp. of Iowa (CCI) crews and some of their housing and food. The CCI crews are predominantly students pursuing education in ecology and resource management, who serve as de fact interns for seasonal work.

During the first two days, field exercises and training sessions for S-211 Portable Pumps and Water Use Class were held.

Ultimately, 13 burns were conducted in Pottawattamie, Harrison and Monona Counties on March 20—22, with 1,243.7 acres burned, of which 214 were on private land. In total, 75 people from 26 agencies or organizations, volunteers and the Missouri Valley Volunteer Fire Department participated. These 75 people represented 2,094.5 man-hours of work, calculated at the current Iowa Volunteer hourly rate of \$22 per hour to represent an in-kind value of over \$46,079.



Protection Activities

The Protection Committee expended \$32,000 in 2018 for a conservation easement on the Muller property in Monona County. The project was led by The Nature Conservancy in Iowa and utilized FY16 LHA funding, which was awarded through a competitive grant.

A Request for Proposals was released to the general public in the fall of 2016. Loess Hills Alliance funding will be **matched 11:1**. Other funding toward this project came from the NRCS Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) program and a sizeable donation of value from the family of Raymond Muller. The property, which will remain in private ownership, is located in the Grant Center Special Landscape Area and will protect over 500 acres of remnant prairie including a number of rare plant species.

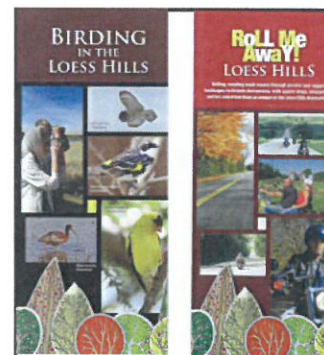


Muller Property, Monona County

Economic Development Activities

The Loess Hills National Scenic Byway provides an important corridor for economic development and tourism. Within the seven county region of the Loess Hills, there are four State welcome centers. The Economic Development Committee worked collaboratively this year to enhance the economy of the Loess Hills region by:

- Providing assistance and resources for small businesses and community attractions.
- Increasing visitor traffic at recreation facilities, events and area attractions.
- Offering education and technical assistance to business and government agencies, to promote economic development opportunities.



The committee places a high priority on advertising the Loess Hills and promoting its many businesses and attractions. Cooperative advertising was placed in numerous publications in neighboring states as well as here in Iowa.

The committee continues to distribute the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway Guidebook. These promotional travel guides are distributed to welcome centers throughout the state and to area attractions and visitors centers. The

Loess Hills Alliance has distributed more than 60,000 guides to Loess Hills visitors since 2014. A reprinting of 30,000 has been approved for FY2019



The Loess Hills region includes some of Iowa's most precious cultural, historic and natural resources. Since the 1980's, **two nationally significant intrinsic qualities have been verified in the region— natural areas and Prehistoric cultural resources.** The unique geological and topographic features of the hills, the extensive natural and semi-natural grasslands and forests and the many archaeological sites found in this one geologic landform create a treasure for the region. **More than 32,500 acres of land are either in public ownership or public protection.**

due to the publications continued high demand. At a recent development summit an international speaker on tourism and downtown development recognized the Loess Hills Guidebook as one of the best he had ever seen and held it up as the gold standard for guidebooks.

The Western Iowa Tourism Region (WITR) receives and fulfills requests for information about the Loess Hills and the Alliance. Fiscal Year '18 fulfillment pieces were mailed on behalf of the Alliance, and continue to show increased demand for information based on advertising efforts. WITR reports that they receive daily requests for Loess Hills information. A noticeable increase in requests for information occur when ads featuring the Loess Hills come out. Our advertising efforts have a big impact on people's desire to learn more about the Loess Hills.

The committee places a high priority on advertising the Loess Hills and promoting businesses and attractions. Advertising was placed in numerous publications that allow information about the Loess Hills to reach into others states as well as here in Iowa.

An ad was placed in the Iowa National Guard Post magazine. This magazine reaches 17,000 enlisted men, women and officers. We also continue to have a presence on mycountyparks.com through the Loess Hills counties that have participated with that website. We also continued our regular advertising in the Sioux City Visitors Guide, the Council Bluffs Visitors Guide, and Our Iowa.

A 53 foot semi-truck is traveling around Iowa showcasing the Loess Hills. This is a partnership with the Iowa Tourism Office and the trucks are part of the Iowa Alcohol Beverages Division (ABD).

