

F I N A L R E P O R T

PARK AND RECREATION ENHANCEMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

Senator James Riordan, Co-chairperson

Representative Dennis Black, Co-chairperson

Submitted to the General Assembly

January 1990

Prepared by the Legislative Service Bureau

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AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Park and Recreation Enhancement Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council and directed to study current and future needs for artificial and natural lakes, state parks, forests, and recreational areas in Iowa and make recommendations on the development of new facilities and the restoration and management of current facilities. The Study Committee was granted three meeting days. The meetings were held on August 14, September 25, and November 29.

The Study Committee was authorized to hire a consultant to assist in completion of the study in an amount not to exceed \$100,000. A final report to the Legislative Council was required by January 1, 1990.

Members of the Study Committee were:

Senator James R. Riordan, Co-chairperson
Representative Dennis Black, Co-chairperson
Senator Norman J. Goodwin
Senator Emil J. Husak
Senator Wilmer Rensink
Senator Kenneth D. Scott
Representative Josephine Gruhn
Representative Wendell Pellett
Representative David Schrader
Representative Phil Tyrrell

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

At its first meeting on August 14, the Study Committee focused primarily on two study topics which were review of the 1988 state parks management plan and lakes development and restoration.

Mr. Mike Carrier, Administrator, Parks, Recreation and Preserves Division, Department of Natural Resources, informed the Study Committee of the steps taken in developing the state parks management plan and its current level of implementation. He noted that the goal of the plan is to better distribute the limited resources of the state dedicated toward park operation. He stated that there is a heavy capital demand to maintain the 65 state

parks and recreation areas and that from 1984 to 1988, the Department had to divert funds from equipment, facility maintenance, and seasonal employees in order to support the state park system. He added that the plan establishes three management categories for the parks based on size, history of use, proximity of large population areas, and the level of development. Mr. Carrier stated that the management plan was in the process of implementation when the General Assembly imposed a moratorium on further implementation during the 1989 Legislative Session in House File 778.

Mr. Allen Farris, Administrator, Fish and Wildlife Division, Department of Natural Resources, outlined the current plans for development of artificial, flat water fishing lakes in various parts of the state. He stated that preliminary plans call for the construction of lakes in Dubuque County, Scott County, Fremont County, and Plymouth County. He noted that in selecting a lake site, a number of technical factors must be considered such as watershed size and ratio, mean basis slope, and soil erosion control practices. He stated that the Department has acquired land in three of the four counties, but no land has been purchased in Dubuque County for Whitewater Lake. Mr. Farris stated that the Department is currently involved with the development of Beaver Lake in Dallas County, Indian Creek Lake in Van Buren County, and Three Mile Lake in Union County.

Concerning the renovation of existing lakes, Mr. Farris stated that the Department has performed a comprehensive review of 102 lakes to provide a ranking for each according to need and potential use and that many of these lakes are being renovated including the first five ranked lakes which are Union Grove Lake, Black Hawk Lake, Lake Manawa, Lower Pine Lake, and Swan Lake.

During its first meeting, the Study Committee decided to divide its study charge into two parts with the Study Committee carrying out the study of the state park management plan and forests and the Study Committee hiring a consultant, George Butler and Associates, Inc., to proceed with the study of lake development and renovation. The Study Committee also agreed that a consultant could not accomplish a complete study of plans and strategies for developing and managing artificial and natural lakes by January 1990. As a result, the Study Committee agreed to hire Mr. David L. Dalhquist, George Butler and Associates, Inc., to accomplish Phase I of the Iowa Lakes Study, consisting of information gathering about lake resources and needs, including a review of current studies, federal funding programs, and procedures for public input. The Study Committee requested and received authorization to commit not more than \$25,000 to Phase I of the Iowa Lakes Study. The actual contract cost was approximately \$22,000.

At its September 25 meeting, the Study Committee continued its discussion with Mr. Michael Carrier concerning the management philosophy for Iowa's state parks and recreation areas. Mr. Carrier stated that the goal of the Department is to provide high quality outdoor recreation experiences for Iowans and visitors at a reasonable cost. He stated that emphasis will be on the improvement of facilities and programs rather than significant expansion of existing areas or the creation of new parks and that a major concern of the Department is the current funding level for park maintenance. He added that the enactment of the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) should accelerate the development of new recreation and park areas, but the concomitant repeal of the state park user fee still leaves a shortfall in the moneys available to maintain and repair existing park facilities. He added that REAP will provide additional funding for park maintenance and repair when it is fully funded, but under the current level of funding for REAP as a whole, the maintenance portion is less than the amount obtained from the state park user fee.

The Study Committee also received testimony from Mr. Bill Farris, Administrator, Forests and Forestry Division, Department of Natural Resources, regarding the current status of the state forests and plans for the future. Mr. Farris noted that the state forests return approximately \$91,000 annually to the state general fund through leases of land, sale of lumber and other forest products, and firewood permits. In addition, approximately \$33,000 worth of lumber and forest products are provided to other state agencies without cost to the recipients. He stated that the forestry division uses approximately 2,200 days of inmate labor from Luster Heights and Riverview Honor Farm which are part of the Department of Corrections. The state forests consist of four relatively large forests ranging from 4,223 acres to 9,906 acres and five smaller tracts ranging from 33 acres to 314 acres. The total state forest land currently is 30,020 acres. Concerning future plans, Mr. Farris stated that the Department plans to expand its forestry acres to 258,785 acres.

The Study Committee also received testimony from Mr. Donald Brazelton, Executive Secretary, Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards, who outlined recommendations concerning state-local cooperative efforts for the management of parks and wildlife areas. He stated that county conservation boards would be interested in managing state park properties if the property has majority use by local citizens, if there is a benefit to the local user, and if there is a benefit to the local management agency.

At its third meeting on November 29, the Study Committee received another report from Mr. Michael Carrier concerning the management plan for Iowa State Parks. In the report, Mr. Carrier specified the management changes which were implemented

before the date of moratorium, changes which the Department plans to implement when the moratorium is lifted, and modifications to the original plan which are recommended as a result of subsequent review and changing circumstances. He added that the plan will be subject to periodic review and additional modifications as usage of parks and other conditions warrant the modification.

The Study Committee received additional testimony from Mr. Allen Farris relating to the development of a field research facility adjacent to the Lake Rathbun Fish Hatchery. He stated that there is a significant need for direct field research to solve current fish management problems and hatchery problems. He added that the construction costs will be shared with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a 75 percent - 25 percent (federal-state) basis and he expects the operational costs will be similarly cost shared.

The Study Committee also received and accepted the report, "Part I -- Assessment of Iowa's Artificial and Natural Lakes" prepared by Mr. David L. Dahlquist of George Butler Associates, Inc. Based on the information gathered during the study, the following observations were made by the consultant:

1. The planning and management of Iowa's artificial and natural lakes are governed by a varied set of federal and state mandates that are constantly evolving. An equally wide variety of funding sources have been used to finance lake restoration and construction of new lakes.

2. The planning and management activities for Iowa's lakes are not widely known by professionals and are even less well understood by interest groups and the general public.

3. Comprehensive, long-range, statewide policies for the restoration and management of existing lakes and the construction of new lakes need to be strengthened and more clearly defined. The General Assembly needs to establish goals and objectives for the formulation of these policies by the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

4. Additional funding will be needed to protect and enhance existing lakes, as well as to plan and construct new lakes.

5. Generally, informed individuals suggest there are numerous reasons to support the creation of new lakes in Iowa. Two assurances which many people believe must be demonstrated prior to the construction of any new lakes are that water quality can be sustained and that new lakes will be long living. These perceptions can be translated to mean a need to protect the relatively high financial investment associated with the construction and long-term management of lakes.

6. Improvements need to be made to the process for selecting sites and planning new lakes to more fully consider tourism, water supply and use, natural areas protection and management, public input, and other important factors.

In summary, the consultant's recommendations for future action are:

1. Increase the awareness and support of policy-makers, professionals, and the general public for lake restoration, management, and construction projects, including sponsorship of an Iowa Lakes Symposium.
2. Explore alternatives for implementing protection and management techniques for state lake watersheds.
3. Adopt statewide goals and objectives for construction of new lakes, rehabilitation of existing lakes, and management of all lakes.
4. Incorporate objectives for state lakes in other statewide planning processes.
5. Expand state lakes data bases and improve lake management planning and decision-making processes.
6. Stabilize and expand funding levels for state lakes programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Park and Recreation Enhancement Study Committee makes the following recommendations to the Legislative Council and the General Assembly:

1. That the General Assembly lift the moratorium imposed on the Department of Natural Resources in House File 778, 1989 Session, regarding the implementation of "A Management Plan for Iowa State Parks" after adjournment of the 1990 Regular Session of the Seventy-third General Assembly only if the following conditions are met:

a. The Plan, as modified and presented to the Park and Recreation Enhancement Study Committee by the Department of Natural Resources, is presented to and approved by the Natural Resource Commission by March 1, 1990.

b. The Department of Natural Resources presents any recommendations made by the Park and Recreation Enhancement Study Committee to modify the Plan to the Natural Resource Commission by March 1, 1990.

c. Any changes made to the Plan after it has been approved by the Natural Resource Commission are presented to the Natural Resource Commission for approval before any further changes are implemented.

2. That the General Assembly fully fund the fiscal year 1991 budget request of the Parks, Recreation and Preserves Division of the Department of Natural Resources.

3. That the Department of Natural Resources develop a list of possible incentives to offer county conservation boards when taking over the management of state parks.

4. That the General Assembly fully fund the Resource Enhancement and Protection Fund (REAP).

5. That the Department of Natural Resources actively solicit civic and volunteer groups to participate in projects that would make parks more enjoyable for users, especially when lack of funds would prohibit the projects from taking place.

6. That the General Assembly increase appropriations to environmental, agricultural, and natural resource programs by \$20 million to \$30 million annually.

7. That any proposed management plan which would change policy within any division of the Department of Natural Resources be required to be presented to and approved by the appropriate commission before the plan is implemented by the Department.

8. That the report entitled "Part I -- Assessment of Iowa's Artificial and Natural Lakes", dated December 1989, by George Butler and Associates, Inc., be accepted by the Legislative Council and the General Assembly.

9. That the Parks and Recreation Enhancement Study Committee be continued during the 1990 interim study period.

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