



Environmental
Advocates

The *Environmental Advocate*

S E P T E M B E R - O C T O B E R 2 0 0 2

EA to Co-sponsor the Hickory Hill Park Community Conservation Symposium September 28, 2002

On September 28, Environmental Advocates will join with Friends of Hickory Hill Park; the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; and a number of other local environmental organizations to sponsor the Hickory Hill Park Community Conservation Symposium. The theme of the symposium is "Sowing Ideas, Growing Consensus" and is designed to initiate and define a vision for the park. The symposium will engage public support and participation in restoring the park as a natural area and address the issue of potential future development around the park.

The first half of the program will consist of a panel discussion on the current ecological state of the park and how best to restore and conserve it. This will include three local conservationists: Harry Graves, Johnson County Conservation Director; Wayne Petersen, Urban Conservationist with the USDA's National Resource Water Conservation Service; and Diana Horton, professor of biology from the University of Iowa. The panelists will speak to the issues involved in prairie restoration, woodland conservation and management, and constructed wetlands and stream stabilization projects.

The second half of the program will focus on how our commitment to conservation extends beyond the park's boundaries to the larger community. Randall Arendt, nationally recognized conservation designer and former vice president of conservation for the Natural Lands Trust, will address the ways in which conservation subdivision design can work in our community. You may recognize Mr. Arendt as the conservation designer who is now working successfully with Southgate Development on the Sand Prairie project.

The symposium will start at 4:00 pm with the conservation panel discussion. A light meal will be served at 6:00 pm, followed featured the speaker, Randall Arendt, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. The symposium is free and open to the public. We invite you to attend all or just a portion of the symposium. Announcements and a complete schedule will be mailed to all EA members soon. For more information contact Sarah Walz at 466-0908 or e-mail sarah-walz@uiowa.edu.

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P.O. Box 1831 • Iowa City, IA 52244



EA is a member of
Iowa Shares and the
Iowa Environmental
Council

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Upcoming Events

Saturday, September 28, 4:00–9:00 pm
[Hickory Hill Park Community
Conservation Symposium](#)
Hickory Hill Park (Iowa City) at the
Bloomington Street entrance

Thursday, October 3, 7:30 pm
[EA Board Meeting](#)
For more information contact
Becky Soglin at 351-6410 or
bsoglin@earthlink.net

Thuday, October 10, time TBA
[The Green Bike Tour](#)
Joe Bolkcom and David Osterberg
discuss renewable energy alternatives at
the IC Public Library. EA members will
recieve an announcement in the mail.

about this newsletter . . .

The *Environmental Advocate* is the newsletter of Environmental Advocates, P.O. Box 1831, Iowa City, IA 52244. An elected board of directors sets policy and oversees the organization's activities.

EA welcomes letters and submissions to the newsletter. However, we reserve the right to reject or edit any submission; articles represent the views of the authors and not necessarily those of EA. If you would like to contribute, contact Sarah Walz, newsletter editor, at 466-0908 or by e-mail at sarah-walz@uiowa.edu.

E-mail submissions should have all text included within the body of the message; no attachments, please.

Fall 2002 Environmental Grant Applications Due October 1

Environmental Advocates (EA) is accepting applications for its fall 2002 grants program. Proposed projects should show clear environmental benefits to the Johnson County area through either action or education. Projects should also support EA's overall mission of making our local environment cleaner, safer, and more life-sustaining.

Priority will given to one-time grants; applications for yearly support for continuing projects are discouraged. Priority also will be given to persons who are EA members. Approximately \$750 in grants will be awarded, with a maximum award of \$500 for any one project. Applications are due Oct. 1, 2002.

Recipients must recognize Environmental Advocates in promotional materials or announcements related to the project and send a copy to EA. In addition, recipients will be asked to provide an article for the EA newsletter, or make a presentation for the public, describing how the funds were used or, if appropriate, allow the public to visit or participate in some aspect of the project.

EA grants awarded last year included support to the Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District for efforts to develop a food education program and funds to a member of Iowa Wetlands in Need to help cover costs to attend a conference.

To apply, please submit a short application (limited to 2 pages) with the basic information requested in item 1 and section headings addressing areas 2-7 listed at the right. You may also include photos/illustrations, if needed; however, such items will not be returned.

Grant Applications:

1. Contact's name; organization/group's name; contact's and/or group's mailing address, phone number and email address
2. Are you or a member of your organization an EA member?
3. Describe your organization's overall mission/goals (if applicable).
4. Describe goals for this project.
5. Describe the environmental benefits to the Johnson County area for your project.
6. Please provide a brief outline of your budget/how you intend to spend the grant money.
7. List other contributors/cooperators and the amount provided by those organizations (list in-kind contributions if applicable).

Send applications to:
Environmental Advocates, P.O. Box 1831,
Iowa City IA 52244.

For more information, contact Mary Skopec, EA grants coordinator, at 337-6234 or bsmshbcases@aol.com, or contact Becky Soglin, EA chair, at bsoglin@earthlink.net.

Visit the EA web site at www.environmental-advocates.org for a copy of the application form.

JOIN US! Become a member or renew your membership

\$10 member \$25 sponsor \$50 supporter other

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Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

EA occasionally provides mailing labels (never mailing lists) to other groups for single-use to contact our membership about events we feel are reputable and of interest.

RETAIN THIS RECEIPT FOR TAX PURPOSES

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Environmental Advocates
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Check number _____

Make check payable to **Environmental Advocates** and mail with this form to:
Environmental Advocates
P.O. Box 1831
Iowa City, IA 52244.

Isolated Wetlands Update— Focus Turns to Federal Level

A report from Iowa Wetlands in Need

Editor's note: This past spring, EA awarded a \$400 grant to Iowa Wetlands in Need (IWIN) for co-founder Julie Tallman to travel to a conference on isolated wetlands in Washington, D.C. As part of EA grant stipulations, awardees are expected to report on their project by writing an article, making a presentation, or offering an interactive event for the public. The following report compiled by Becky Soglin, summarizes IWIN's recent and current efforts.

Iowa Wetlands in Need (IWIN) has worked since March 2001 to restore isolated wetlands protections that were lost in early 2001 due to a U.S. Supreme Court decision known as SWANCC. This past July, the City of Iowa City had the opportunity to revise its Sensitive Areas Ordinance so that the document's original intent—to regulate and protect isolated wetlands—was restored. Sadly, despite strong evidence and arguments from wetlands experts and others, and a unanimous endorsement from the Planning and Zoning Commission for the revision, the majority of the council members voted not to restore the wetlands protections (see sidebar). IWIN, EA, and supporters have moved on to the next goal—a federal effort.

An opportunity at the federal level exists through HR5194, the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act of 2002, which could restore protections in the act over the nation's wetlands as they existed prior to SWANCC.

EA has joined IWIN in asking Congressman Jim Leach to co-sponsor HR5194 because it will restore protection to the network of wetlands that

- 1) protect the quality of our nation's waters;
- 2) help reduce the impact of flooding across our nation; and
- 3) ensure that native habitat exists for the migratory birds and animals that enrich our nation.

A memo written 26 June, 1998, by Gregory E. Peck, Acting Director of the Wetlands Division of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), cited the flood control and pollution control benefits of wetlands (page 9 of 15). He referenced reports written by the Inter-Agency Floodplain Management Task Force and the U.S. Geological Survey:

- 1) Uplands wetland restoration can be effective for controlling large and small flood events (Interagency Task Force, 1994b at 47); and
- 2) Historic destruction of wetlands, including isolated wetlands, increased the severity of the flooding that did take place in the Midwest in 1993 (USGS, 1996 at 43).

Peck's memo was withdrawn by the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers after SWANCC, but IWIN and EA have asked Representative Leach to consider that the data supporting these arguments have not changed. Isolated wetlands can still help control flooding, and can still help filter out pollutants—what we need to do is restore the nation's ability to preserve our water resources by revisiting the Clean Water Act after the SWANCC interpretation.

For more information, contact Becky Soglin, IWIN co-founder, at 351-6410 or bsoglin@earthlink.net

An overview of the Iowa City Council isolated wetlands vote.

Irvin Pfab and Ross Wilburn were the only council members who voted for the revision. The other council members' reasons for nonsupport included contradictory arguments. Dee Vanderhoef claimed that protecting these wetlands would cost too much. In fact, the city could continue protecting wetlands in the same cost-effective manner it had before SWANCC. Mayor Ernie Lehman opposed the ordinance, saying there were not that many wetlands to protect in the first place. Yet two wetlands had already been filled in due to lost protections.

Many council members failed to see wetland protection as a legitimate local issue. Several members said they would not vote in favor local controls because it would put the city in a position, as expressed by council member Connie Champion, as being "holier than the law" or "holier than the pope." In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court decision said the matter was indeed one for local, county and state jurisdiction. The court's decision was a legal, not an environmental, one. Its judgment did not mean that isolated wetlands were not worth protecting but rather the court rejected the previous interpretation of the definition of "waters of the United States" and so removed Corps of Engineers' authority over isolated waters.

Last, council member Steven Kanner voted against the proposed SAO revision because he felt it did not go far enough and that it was "worse for us to pass [the revision] than to not have it." However, the more stringent level that he desired had been an optional, not compulsory, level of protection that the Corps could have exercised pre-SWANCC. In addition, while some very small wetlands would not have been "re-protected" by the proposed SAO revision in certain, but by no means all, situations, and IWIN respected the desire to do more to protect wetlands, the gap was not significant enough to merit a "no" vote for the revision. In the end, IWIN felt that Kanner's position did not recognize the value and extent of protection that could have been regained.

October Event

EA and the Sierra Club will co-sponsor an event on October 10. David Osterberg and state representative Joe Bolkcom will discuss the Green Bike Tour, which took them to Europe this summer to explore opportunities in renewable energy. No time has been set for the event, which will take place at the Iowa City Public Library. EA members will receive announcements in the mail.



Car Talk Launches the “Live Larger, Drive Smaller” Campaign

Tom and Ray from NPR’s *Car Talk* have launched a national campaign to discourage car buyers from choosing SUVs. Their web site is full of useful and sensible information. Check it out at cartalk.cars.com/info/suv and get a free bumper sticker.

Citizens for Public Power Update

Saul Mekies and Carol Spaziani, co-chairs of the Citizens for Public Power (formerly the Public Power Initiative), attended the August 13 joint cities meeting in Ankeny hosted by the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities (IAMU). The meeting’s purpose was to discuss the preparation and issuance of a joint Request for Proposal (RFP) for a feasibility study for the establishment of public electric power utilities in each of the participating cities. The cities of Emmetsburg and Everly, which have already completed recent feasibility studies, shared their information with the group. Mekies and Spaziani reported the following observations to the city council at its August 20 meeting.

- 1) It appeared that there could be big savings by having a joint feasibility study. The total cost was estimated at between \$80,000 and \$100,000, with Iowa City’s share projected at about \$24,000-\$30,000. A precise formula for cost sharing has not yet been determined, but it seems likely that the cost for the part of the information applicable to all the cities may be shared based on an agreed-upon formula, and the costs for city-specific information would be borne by the individual city.
- 2) The cost of the feasibility study will be lower for each city participating in the joint effort, not only because of economies of scale, but also because the IAMU has offered to provide to whatever consultant is hired, information for two key components of the study: (1) a legal precedent and assumption analysis surrounding system acquisition, and (2) four recent IAMU studies of the costs of wholesale power.
- 3) The Emmetsburg feasibility study showed a cost savings in residential rates ranging from a worst-case scenario of 10% to 24%. (The average cost savings provided by the 137 municipally-owned electric utilities in Iowa to consumers is 35% when compared to the average of the rates charged by investor-owned utilities. Emmetsburg’s projected savings are less than Iowa City’s would be because Emmetsburg is located in the MidAmerican District now charging their lowest rates. A rate hike is expected next year.)

The proposed RFP, drafted at the Aug. 13 meeting, will soon be ready for consideration by the city council. This joint process offers the citizens of Iowa City a great opportunity to gather information on the feasibility of public power for Iowa City. Citizens for Public Power is very excited about what was learned through the August 13 joint meeting, and remain optimistic that this will save the citizens of Iowa City money as well as help further economic development.



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Support Iowa Shares

Iowa Shares is a coalition of 18 social and environmental nonprofit organizations working to build better communities through research, education, advocacy and direct service. Environmental Advocates, Women's Resource & Action Center and United Nations Association are three local organizations addressing community problems at their roots.



Payroll deduction is available through the University of Iowa and Iowa City Community Schools. Donors can give cash or checks. Contact: Del Holland, 338-5220 or Jean Martin 351-6391 for further information.

Hickory Hill Park Community Conservation Symposium

“Sowing Ideas, Growing Consensus”

Saturday, September 28, 2002 • 4–9:00 pm

Lower Hickory Hill Park (Bloomington Street entrance) in Iowa City

Designed to initiate and define a vision for the park, the Hickory Hill Park Community Conservation Symposium will foster a community conversation about land conservation in the park and future development around the park.

4-6:00 pm Conservation Conversation

A panel discussion exploring the ecological condition of the park and the possibilities for native habitat restoration. Panelists: Harry Graves, Johnson County Conservation Director; Wayne Petersen, Urban Conservationist, USDA–Natural Resource Water Conservation Service; and Diana Horton, professor of biology from the University of Iowa.

6-7:00 pm A light meal catered by the Red Avocado

7–9:00 pm Conservation Beyond the Boundaries

A presentation on conservation design and the possibilities for addressing issues of land-use and land conservation on private land surrounding the park. Featured Speaker: Randall Arendt, nationally recognized conservation designer, former vice president of conservation at the Natural Lands Trust, and founder and president of Greener Prospects, Narragansett, Rhode Island.

This event is sponsored by Friends of Hickory Hill Park; the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; Environmental Advocates; Johnson County Heritage Trust; the University of Iowa Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning; 1000 Friends of Iowa; Iowa Prairie Network; and Loomis Construction, Inc.

Additional support is provided by the Johnson County Green Party and the Iowa City Parks and Recreation Department.