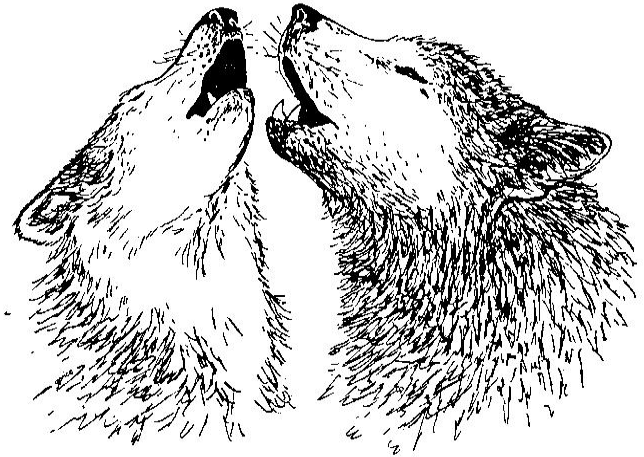


Osborne Oracle



Fall 2024

Clayton County Conservation

Vol. 47 No.2

Why Are We Fighting for the People? by Jenna K. Pollock, Executive Director

Introspection, a valuable skill, be it in personal or professional endeavors, often implies *why* behavior patterns are motivated or in certain instances unmotivated.

The ponderance of *why* has served as a key talking point this past quarter at various conferences held across the state. Several presenters circled back to the *why* behind managerial approach and marketing strategies.

An Iowa legislator spoke on how to implement long-range, essential funding for county conservation, and really regarding all conservation efforts across the state, shifted his presentation away from “how,” which I think was what everyone was hoping to hear, and put an emphasis back on the “why” we are still fighting for this measure.

A followership presentation (ok, it was about leadership skills, but more on that later), narrowed the topic down to two questions that leaders must ask themselves every day. Both of those questions come back to one word, three letters, that is asked by every young child of wonder: *Why?*

County Conservation Board management and administrative structure varies from county to county, but each Director endeavors to keep their staff happy. If the staff is happy, the public will be better served.

There are some higher-level ambitions, and there are some lower-level ambitions for those just entering the public workforce, but ultimately our day-in and day-out

“why” boils down to serving the people.

Most every individual I’ve interviewed in the last ten years, when asked why they want to work in the conservation field gives a similar answer: *like being outside, like nature, like to hunt and fish, like educating people.*

There’s a certain element of stewardship, to care for public places, that’s necessary to draw all these similar yet different answers together.

Why do they want to come to work every day? *Why* do they want to care for the habitat (be it on land or water)? *Why* do they want to save the planet? Because they feel like they’re offering a service, for the greater good. *For the people.*

In recent years, partners in county conservation have tried, year after year, to get Iowa legislators to enact the 2010 voter-approved funding of Iowa’s Water and Land Legacy Act.

It’s a long-term funding source for conservation practices across the state of Iowa. At the Iowa County Conservation System’s fall conference Senator Dan Dawson was asked to ignite the like-minded individuals with the strategy for this upcoming legislation session.

Not everyone in county conservation agrees with his past attempts to increase sales tax in Iowa to fund the conservation trust.



Statewide Master Conservationist meeting in 2024 Continued on page 2...

Why Are We Fighting for the People ...continued from page 1

While the audience was hoping for a grand reveal of *how* this year's proposals would get us over the hump, Dawson had the audience reflect on *why* we're *still* fighting for this legislative action.

When elected officials show up in Des Moines in January for the next legislative session and ask themselves "why am I here," there better only be one answer. *For the people.*



Field trip at Osborne

The Iowa State Association of Counties, a member of the National Association of Counties, hosted speaker Dr. Tim Rahschulte to educate several Iowa County employees from the state about leadership.

Two elemental questions were posed, which each leader needs to consider every morning before they choose to

lead. 1) What will I do with the world as I find it? 2) What shows up when I do?

Both of those questions boil down to the service of why every leader and every follower shows up, day after day, and endeavors to do good. *Why? For the People.*

In any public works department, there are countless challenges and hurdles but the greater good of service

remains that shared constant. There are budgetary hurdles, a mirage or red tape, policy, protocols, and stipulations.

There's hierarchy to each organization, authorizations and approvals to move forward, checks and balances to stay fiscally constrained.

At the end of the day, the same *why* is asked in each department, regardless of frustrations and wins experienced within the hour. Did I serve the public good? If the answer isn't a resounding, *Yes!*, then it may be time to reflect on the argument and figure out, *Why are we fighting?*



The author serving the people, literally, at an event in 2021



MUSIC UNDER THE MOON
AT MOTOR MILL
Marques Morel & Simon Cropp
OCT. 17 | 5:30-8 PM
Bring your own food, chair, and beverage
Popcorn and cider available
Full moon woodland wander with a naturalist after the show




PONY HOLLOW TRAIL
5K / 15K RACE
OCTOBER 26, 2024 - 9:00AM
PRE-REGISTER NOW!
WWW.CLAYTONCOUNTYCONSERVATION.ORG



Clayton County Conservation Board's Upcoming Events & Programs



Heritage Days

Saturday & Sunday, October 12th/13th
Osborne Park
10:00-4:00 each day

Back for it's 49th year, it's almost time for Heritage Days! This year's event will feature all the classics—pumpkin contests, pioneer church service, live music, kids' games, poop throwing—with great vendors, demonstrations, and food to enjoy during the fall leaf season.

Older, Wiser, Livelier, Souls

Thursday, October 17th, 2024
"Iowa Dairy Center Tour"

Tour the state-of-the-art robotic milking facility added in 2013 which milks around 160 Holstein cows in total! Tour will also include a walkthrough of the free stall barn, maternity barn, calf barn, and the hall of breeds.

The group will leave from Osborne Park at 10:00 a.m. and the tour will begin at 11:00 a.m.

Music Under the Moon at Motor Mill

Thursday, October 17th, 2024
Motor Mill Historic Site
5:30-8:00 PM

Gather at the Motor Mill Stable to enjoy some live bluegrass and folk music performed by Marques Morel and Simon Cropp! Popcorn and cider will be available at the event. Bring your own chairs, and any additional food or beverages. This will be a free-will donation event with funds going towards supporting Motor Mill Foundation projects.

After the show guests are encouraged to join in for a Full Moon Woodland Wander guided by one of our Clayton County Naturalists. Explore the woodland trails under the light of the full moon!

Pony Hollow Trail 5K/15K

Saturday, October 26th, 2024
Elkader City Park
9:00 AM
Registration Required

Come join Clayton County Conservation for the 6th annual Pony Hollow 15k Trail Run and 2nd annual 5k run/walk! This mostly flat, lime-chipped course with scenic autumn views makes this a truly unique event.

Male and female age group winners will receive a prize. Pre-registration info can be found on our website and packet pick up will be on race day in the Elkader City Park shelter house from 7:30-8:45. Register by Oct 19th to receive race swag. Registration price will increase on race day so get those entries in soon!

Older, Wiser, Livelier, Souls

"American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace."
Thursday, November 21st, 2024 – 11 AM
Osborne Conservation Center

Humanities Iowa Speaker Tom Milligan will be back again for an engaging performance of "American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace."

Motor Mill Bridge Lighting and Open House

Saturday, November 23rd
4:30-6:30 PM
Motor Mill Historic Site

The elves will be hard at work decorating the historic bridge at Motor Mill with lights to welcome visitors throughout the holiday season. Come on down to see the fruits of their labor this fall, and don't forget to dress for the weather!

Holiday Walk

Thursday, December 5th
6:00—9:00 PM
Osborne Park
Registrations Required

Bring the family out for a beautiful themed walk on a winter's evening, followed by cookies, cocoa, and choral delights provided by Central's Madrigal Choir!

Owl Prowl

Friday, January 31st 5:30 PM
Osborne Nature Center

Come for a night hike and learn about these secretive nocturnal animals. Visitors will look for wild owls and owl pellets along the trail while we try to call owls in. This fun hike will last about an hour and a half. Remember to bring a flashlight and dress for the weather!

Heritage Days Traffic Flow



Here's an update on our efforts to inform the public and try to reduce traffic incidents along Highway 13 during Heritage Days, Saturday and Sunday, October 12-13, 2024.

High traffic volume expected both days primarily from 11am-2:30pm. The grounds are open for Heritage Days event from 10am-4pm. Vendors and Exhibitors typically arrive around 8am and depart by 4pm.

We're asking the public to follow these measures:

- No Parking on shoulder
- Do not block the driveway
- Handicap placard must be displayed for handicap parking access
- Enter and Exit through the main entrance
Anyone towing a trailer of any kind will use the "Camper Parking"
- Vendors/Exhibitors and Ambulance are the only vehicles allowed in the Pioneer Village for parking
- Foot Traffic! Please use the designated trail leading to the Pioneer Village from the parking area. **DO NOT** try walking through vehicular traffic on Osborne Rd.

Coming This Winter: Pile Burn Pop-Up Party!



We've got a lot of wood to burn this winter and thought-why should we have all the fun?

Stay tuned to our Facebook and Instagram once the flakes are flying. When a good, heavy snow falls and looks to stay awhile, we'll light up 9 large brush piles along our prairies east of the Osborne Pond.

We'll have snowshoes available for rental, but feel free to bring sleds, cross country skis, hot dogs and/or marshmallows, and enjoy a day exploring the prairie, building snowmen, or throwing snowballs while the fires provide a nice place to warm up between adventures!

Everyone loves a good bonfire. Bring your family and friends and celebrate a snow day the old-fashioned way—after you get your driveway shoveled, of course.

To Burn Pile or Not To Burn Pile- by Kenny Slocum

Slash. What a great name for the pile of debris left behind after a good habitat project. Thinning the understory, clearing cedars off a remnant prairie, or even just trimming the limbs on an urban tree, all produce a heaping helping of “timber slash.”

The name conjures imagery of hard work, the successful byproduct of a job well done, and of course, a pretty good guitarist.

But it also has significance: we do not call that stuff “lawn waste,” or “garbage,” or “junk.” And with good reason: it’s anything but useless.

Which makes the question of how to dispose of it, if at all, hugely important in meeting habitat goals and doing positive stewardship.

Dead and dying wood feeds countless organisms. Initially, borers and bark beetles will feed on the cambium, harvesting sugars the plant had intended to transport to its roots and leaves.

Their activity attracts the attention of predators. Woodpeckers, of course, get after these critters both before the death of the tree and afterwards, smacking cavities into bark that invites more invaders.

Centipedes, too, may start plying at the loose bark in their hunt for small prey. Close-quartered combat makes their hunt a little easy, particularly for those meals that have wings.

The spaces opened up by all these borers and pokers and hunters quickly become colonized by molds and fungi. With no immune system to defend against their growth, the wood provides a perfect medium for them to slowly replace the tree’s cells with their own.

This, in turn, produces scents which attract new guilds of insects. Springtails and silverfish move in to feast on the mold, and their predators follow them right into the ever-expanding network of tunnels and crevices developing in the wood.



Within those tunnels, ants and termites find half the work of building a new colony completed already. They further excavate the interior, shielded from the worst of winter’s winds and all but the strongest beaks of their avian predators.

The increasing space within the log provides a spot for water to start seeping in. Like the pores on a sponge, the homes—occupied, or perhaps abandoned—the small vacancies hold dew and precipitation for longer than their surroundings, thanks to being shielded from the sun.

The log becomes a microclimate of higher humidity and lower temperatures; the spores of a moss can’t believe their good fortune to land in such a place.

The mosses flourish in the constant moisture, and in turn release their own along the surface of the log through respiration. Another microclimate is created, where insects can find some respite from the comparatively-desiccated forest floor during hot, dry spells.

Now, the weak-beaks can take advantage. A proliferation of insects along the surface of the log feed young birds, and those species who lack the strength to pull off a piece of bark to catch the first wave of log-lovers.

Little by little, this writhing mass of insects and centipedes and fungi and bacteria and birds and moss, each consuming the log in their own way, convert the woody tissue to dirt.

The dead wood turns to compost. One of the ants living therein, out on a foraging mission, comes across the seeds of Wild Ginger. The seed has an eliasome, a little smear of fat on one end of the seed, and a great treat in the early spring for the ant colony.

It tells its friends through chemical signaling that it has found the smorgasbord, and they dutifully lug the seeds back home to their colony in the log. The group feasts on the eliasomes, and discards the rock-hard seed left behind on the surface of the log.

Continued on page 6...

LEAVE A LEGACY

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
of Greater Dubuque

“To know even one other life has
breathed easier because you lived.
This is to have succeeded.”
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Osborne Partners for Education Endowment Fund was started by Susi Nehls and Roy Blair in memory of Susi’s father, Dr. Joe Hickey. Dr. Hickey’s research led to the legislation that protected birds of prey like the bald eagle. Dr. Hickey’s passion for teaching others about the natural world was sparked early by adults who introduced him to the wonders of nature.

<https://www.dbqfoundation.org/donors/giving-center/osborne-partners-education-endowment>

To Burn Pile or Not To Burn Pile continued from page 5

The seeds sprout, and take root in the rich compost of the decaying log. But a few didn't make it; on the way back, a handful of ants got snatched by the tongue of a baby tree frog, stowed away in the shade of the log, the humidity keeping her skin moist.

Satiated, she hops away to find a spot to rest. The movement captures the attention of a tiger salamander, burrowed into the soft wood. With a thrash of his head, he latches onto her leg for a moment before she can wrest it loose and escape.

We can see that the “slash,” for much of the forest, is anything but waste. And the effect is multiplied when that slash becomes a pile.

A whole fractal ecology emerges as rodents, rabbits, and birds take up residence amongst the shelter. Foxes, snakes, and weasels follow, chasing prey through the jungle gym.

The pile becomes a winter retreat for these creatures and more, sheltered from the wind and insulated beneath the snow blanketing the dome of decay.

All of this happens in addition to the carbon calculation: though much of the CO₂ gathered during the tree's life is released, it happens much more gradually than in a single event. It's enough to wonder—why do we burn brush piles at all? Especially conservation organizations?

Well, there are some good reasons to do so, but context is everything.

For example, last winter we cleared a tree line between several formerly-disconnected prairie plantings. While it did not change the overall acreage of prairie, it did change the *functionality* of those acres.

Many prairie species will not use the grassland if they cannot get far enough away from the nearest tree line. Their instincts tell them those trees harbor predators; hawks from above, foxes and coyotes from below.

But, to really address this “area sensitivity,” for creatures like the Henslow's Sparrow (endangered species found at Osborne), we need to do more than make it *look* like the trees are gone.

Those piles will harbor the same predators, and leave those grassland-obligates similarly vulnerable. So, this winter, we will burn those piles. However, since they are right next to (or in) some highly-flammable prairie, we'll have to wait until the snow can protect the surroundings.

Of course, snow and fire don't mix, so in order to keep them dry we laid tarps over the top that will give us a dry lighting off point. Once they do, those piles will burn for a

while

In fact, Native Americans used to use this to their advantage in setting intentional fires to meadows and forests in the northwest, in the days before drip torches and weather forecasts.

A punky log pile, lit off in late winter amongst the melting snows, would smolder until spring when it could ignite the surrounding vegetation whenever conditions permitted, no meteorology necessary.

These days we have a little more to consider before burning a pile. As with all fire, the wind plays a big role. Travelers on Hwy 13 might not love navigating a big plume of smoke, so we'll need a day or two with the wind headed the other direction.

The tarps also help with some of that smoke. By lighting a pile from the top, a “flame cap” is created that will burn off much of the particulates as the fuel below begins to ignite, significantly reducing the smoke output.

When all is said and done, we'll have some pretty significant burn scars—patches of largely sterilized soil, ripe for weeds to invade. So we'll have to seed over them when the last coals die out to get desirable habitat on the site.

I don't love the idea of evicting so many creatures from their winter homes, but if it's in service of a greater good I have to live with it.

Long story short, there are good reasons to burn a brush pile, but there's a lot of good reasons *not to* as well. Like many aspects of habitat management, sometimes we have to adjust our aesthetics to match what's best for the land.

And please, especially with this dry spell—be thoughtful about *when* you burn your pile! Keep in mind that once ignited, it will be difficult to put out if conditions change in a day or two.



Kelsi Davis joins Conservation as Clayton County Energy Coordinator

Please welcome Kelsi Davis to the Clayton County Conservation Department.

The Clayton County Energy District and Clayton County Conservation Board are proud to announce that Kelsi Davis was hired as the Energy District Coordinator.

In her new position, she will uphold the shared values of the Clayton County Conservation Board and the Clayton County Energy District Board (CCED) in conserving natural resources and promoting the general welfare of Clayton County residents. This new position is aimed at strengthening Clayton County communities by delivering clean energy education, coordinating energy coaching services, and ultimately reducing energy burden.

Kelsi's story of environmental intrigue began on the farm, like many other northeast Iowa natives. Her father farms corn and soybeans near Luana, IA with her grandfather and brother-in-law. Through the seemingly limitless imagination and curiosity of a child Kelsi wandered the areas surrounding the farm, developing a deep connection with the land she calls home.

As an adult, however, she realized her sense of childish wonder missed part of the picture, specifically the burden resource consumption has placed on the planet. This founded her journey to discovering her part in the movement for social advocacy, climate justice, and the transition to clean energy.

Kelsi attended The University of Iowa in Iowa City where she earned two degrees in Environmental Policy and Philosophy (a personal passion for which she has MFL Mar Mac educator Dale Crozier to thank) with an additional certificate in Sustainability. Her studies combined with volunteerism and advocacy work helped navigate her path forward.

She began her career in clean energy selling solar arrays, inspired by helping others to achieve energy independence, cost reductions, and lower emissions.

After returning home to Clayton County, though, Kelsi sought an opportunity more suited to her interests in

advocacy and community work. The emerging partnership between Clayton County Conservation and the Energy District presented that opportunity.

A central aspect of Kelsi's position is promoting the idea of "green meeting green". Energy efficiency and clean energy sources are great for the environment, but they're also great for your wallet.

Regardless of which "green" drives the decision to invest in energy efficiency, the Energy District Coordinator will facilitate connections with energy coaches to determine a customized approach to energy efficiency.

Another important part of this role will involve community education through various outreach events, social media posts, classroom visits, and discussions with organizations such as city councils or local businesses.

"The Conservation Department is eager to help convey the ever-changing technology surrounding energy conservation and best practices that can benefit area residents," said Jenna Pollock, Clayton County Conservation Board Director.



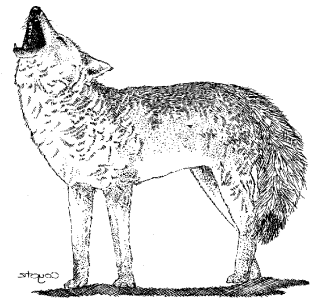
Kelsi's position revolves around the community and will require transparency, frequent communication through various media sources, and inclusivity for all. She is honored to fulfill the Energy District Coordinator role and she looks forward to the opportunity to make a difference in the community she loves.

"Our piece of Iowa contains an abundance of natural beauty, friendly communities, and a thriving economic sector. I want to add to these advantages by reducing the percentage of income spent on power for all residents of Clayton County which simultaneously conserves our natural resources, reduces emissions, and keeps local dollars in the local economy," says Kelsi Davis, Clayton County Energy District Coordinator.

Kelsi can be reached through the Osborne Nature Center or through her direct email: kdavis@claytoncountyyia.gov

Clayton County Conservation
 Osborne Conservation Center
 29862 Osborne Rd, Elkader, IA 52043
 (563) 245-1516

*Osborne Public Programs
 listed inside!*



The Clayton County Conservation Board does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age or handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to such discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Clayton County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

Conservation Board Members:

Daryl Landsgard, St. Olaf.....Chair
 Dave Asche, Monona.....Member
 Gary Kregel, Garber.....Vice Chair
 Larry Stone, Elkader.....Secretary
 Natasha Hegmann.....Member

Staff

Jenna Pollock.....Director
 Zach Dingbaum.....Park Ranger
 Hunter Jensen.....Operations/Maintenance
 Abbey Harkrader.....Naturalist
 Kenny Slocum...Naturalist/Resource Manager
 Molly Scherf.....Office Manager
 Ean Popenhagen.....Office Assistant
 Nick Moser.....Operations Supervisor
 Kelsi Davis....Clayton County Energy District
 Coordinator

Website: www.claytoncountyconservation.org
Facebook: [Clayton County Conservation](https://www.facebook.com/ClaytonCountyConservation)
Instagram: [@ClaytonCountyConservation](https://www.instagram.com/ClaytonCountyConservation)

**Osborne Nature Center &
 Gift shop Hours**

Monday-Friday

8:00am - 4:00pm

Weekend Hours

Saturday

8:00am - 4:00pm

Sunday

Noon-4:00pm

Closed on Weekends Nov. 1 through Apr. 1



Clayton County Conservation Board meetings are the second Tuesday of every month. Meetings are open to the public. See website for details, locations, and past meeting minutes.

The mission of the Clayton County Conservation Board is to promote the health and general welfare of the people and to encourage preservation, conservation, education, and recreation through responsible use and appreciation of our natural resources and cultural heritage.