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TURKEY CREEK 2005:

A year of planning, progress, and discovery

The Turkey Creek Management Committee (D. Schwab, J. Musser, D. Baker, C. Mutel and L. Schweer) had a busy and productive year in 2005.

We began the year by preparing an extensive property assessment and management plan. Mike Fallon prepared a 73-page Stewardship Management Plan with guidance and assistance from the Management Committee; especially Connie Mutel and Dick Baker. This report draws on our knowledge of the property, Mike's fieldwork, and Tom Madsen's detailed inventory of the property.



Turkey Creek workday

The plan points out that this one property has 19 major vegetative communities. These communities include 5 savanna remnants, a reconstructed prairie, 3 brome grass fields, 2 limestone bluff communities, a riparian community, 5 emergent tree stands, a successional oak-hickory to maple-basswood stand, and a mature oak-hickory-maple-basswood stand. This diversity is exciting but also challenging, as each of these communities on this property has distinct stewardship and management needs.

Through the generosity of Barbara Buckley and the great work of Tom Gelman and Connie Mutel, we gained access to the eastern 2/3 of the property. Barbara Buckley, our neighbor to the east, has granted us an access easement for maintenance only across her property. Adam Galluzzo, our marvelous summer intern, and I installed a gate between the properties and created a set of maintenance trails. These trails give us better access to nearly all the features on the east side of the creek-- this is wonderful.

What we discovered in the brome fields wasn't quite so wonderful. Autumn-olive has completely overgrown brome fields #2 and #3. We spent much of the summer in invasive battle gear cutting the plants with a chain saw and treating the stumps with a 20% solution of Roundup. We got great assistance from Ray and Miles Newkirk and both access and assistance from our Hidden Acres neighbor Jim Cooper. There is more to do in 2006, but we made significant headway in 2005. We'd like to complete the process with a burn, but that plan may be based more on hope than reality since there isn't much fuel.

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TURKEY CREEK 2005:

A year of planning, progress, and discovery

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Back across the creek, we had three workdays, each supported by strong corps of volunteers. We spent a workday opening up the entrance to the property. We removed old, unnecessary fencing, and cut and burned both dead trees and invasive plants. We discovered an antique John Deere manure spreader (in need of a bit of maintenance); this is available to anyone for a small (very small) contribution!

The second workday was spent doing a controlled burn of the south half of our prairie restoration. It was WINDY! We had 22 volunteers on hand and excellent leadership from Brad Freidhof and Dick Baker. The burn went well. We are pleased with the diversity of our prairie; it still needs work and attention but it continues to be a source of pride for our Trust.



Brad Freidhof at the Turkey Creek burn.

On the third workday, we had hoped to burn the brome field to the south of the prairie on the west side of the creek. We had a great crew again but lacked sufficient fuel and wind to conduct an effective burn. We noted with pleasure that our efforts earlier in the year to kill invasive plants (autumn-olive and multiflora rose) had been successful.

Next year we will continue to focus on eradicating invasive plants—primarily in the brome fields. We will attempt a spring burn in the brome both to kill invasive plants and to stimulate any remnant prairie species. We will also continue our efforts to clean up the entrance. We encourage members to walk the property and marvel at the beauty of the prairie and the woodlands as they come back to life each spring and prove to us that our work is indeed worthwhile.

Dick Schwab

Capital Campaign Update

A big THANK YOU to all our Capital Campaign contributors. A number of people made multiple year commitments and they are fulfilling their commitments on a timely basis. Two contributions deserve special mention:

- Jackie Blank gave a \$1,000 gift, which was accidentally omitted from the donor listing in our June newsletter.
- An anonymous donor gave a \$10,000 gift.

We thank all members and contributors for their financial assistance. We have received \$95,775 in donations to date, with an additional \$64,180 in payments pledged over the next year or so. Your support enables us to practice sound stewardship on our existing properties and purchase additional property that merits protection.

David Curry

Senior Center Tour

In mid-September, about a dozen Iowa City Senior Center participants were led on a JCHT-sponsored prairie-woodland tour by Board member Gene Szymkowiak and JCHT members Erin Irish and Connie Mutel. The three-hour tour circled from the Solon Prairie in southeastern Solon, up to a prairie remnant west of Solon that JCHT may acquire, back south to a private woodland undergoing restoration, and then to our Turkey Creek Preserve where we hiked the trails. As the group walked each area, tour leaders talked about the site's natural characteristics, the need for preservation of our native landscapes, and JCHT's efforts to improve stewardship of its preserves. The group was curious, lively, and enthusiastic about the areas we saw and about JCHT's efforts. This field tour was part of an ongoing effort to raise JCHT's profile and to educate the general public about our county's natural communities and their needs.

Connie Mutel

Membership Matters! Please Renew...

Johnson County Heritage Trust depends on its members' support to fulfill our mission of "preserving our natural heritage through identification, acquisition and management of land with significant environmental value." This support comes in many forms – volunteer activities on our properties, work on JCHT committees and the Board itself, contributions to our capital campaign, speaking to friends and family about the importance of preserving land in Johnson County, and paying the annual membership dues.

We have been very pleased with the generous support given to our "Watershed Moment" capital campaign. However, as stated in our capital campaign literature, these monies will be used only for direct restoration and preservation expenses for our current properties, and to pay for new properties of significant environmental value. The everyday activities of our organization still must be paid for: insurance on our properties, printing and mailing this newsletter, updating and distributing our brochure, maintaining our website, etc. For these expenses, we depend on your membership dues.

You'll notice the new dues structure shown on the attachment to the enclosed brochure. The Membership Committee recommended, and the Board adopted, new dues amounts starting in 2006. The basic \$10 dues level was adopted at our founding in 1978 -- clearly \$10 doesn't buy now what it did in 1978. We have retained the \$10 membership level for students to encourage membership among young people, the future mainstays of JCHT. Regular dues will now start at \$25, with family membership available at \$40. Of course, for those who can afford to contribute more, we would encourage membership at the Sustaining Member (\$50), Sponsor (\$100), or even higher level.

The other change adopted by the Board on the recommendation of the Membership Committee is to limit distribution of the JCHT newsletter to dues-paying members only starting in 2006 - to provide the newsletter as one of the membership benefits. In the past we have sent newsletters out to people we thought would be interested in JCHT activities. However, now that the increased pace of activities has required us to begin publishing the newsletter more often, we need to confine the mailing to members only.

Now is the time to join or to renew your Johnson County Heritage Trust membership for 2006. Please fill out and return the enclosed form - we need your support!

David Curry

New Properties Under Consideration

JCHT is currently considering several properties for possible acquisition by purchase or for the placement of conservation easements. However, because the high cost of being responsible for the long-term preservation (and, potentially, restoration) of additional properties, the Board is reviewing and revising its formal criteria for land acquisition to guide its decision making. It is clear that our resources will not allow JCHT to preserve all local land with significant environmental value. A group of current and former Board members met at the end of November to begin the development of Land Protection Criteria, and a follow-up meeting will be held in the near future.

One property under consideration is the two-acre Propane Prairie, west of Solon, on which a plant inventory has been completed. The survey was done by Pete Kollasch and Casey Kohrt and it disclosed 115 species of which over 80 percent are native. A ten-acre property, mostly woodland, near Indian Lookout south of Iowa City, is also being reviewed and a land proposal evaluation team has been appointed to report back to the Board. A third property under investigation is a thirty-acre parcel north of Iowa City. This property has a mix of woodland, field and wetland, and the owner is considering a bargain sale to JCHT. Each of these properties has its strengths, weaknesses, and associated costs. The Board will defer a decision on their acquisition until the land protection criteria have been established.

David Curry



Progress in Stewardship

Thanks to the financial support of JCHT's members and friends, we have been able to contract with two individuals to help us improve the stewardship of our properties.

We hired Tom Madsen, a talented University of Iowa undergraduate, to perform a vegetation survey of our five properties. Working with the assistance of Diana Horton, Tom visited the properties numerous times from spring through fall to record species, both welcome and unwelcome. The Heritage Trust will use information from the vegetation survey to guide its work in protecting rare and uncommon species and eliminating invasive ones.

Tom gave a progress report at the August board meeting. Those preliminary results were as follows:

Turkey Creek—over 300 species found, with 85% native and a number of them unusual; a number of areas on the bluff could be co-managed with the Corps of Engineers;

Belgium Grove—230 species found, with fewer than 70% native; large areas are dominated by alien species, some aggressive, and native species are spread out widely;

Big Grove—almost 200 species found, with about 85% native; patchy spots of garlic mustard (since dealt with) and an area where autumn olive may become a problem;

Hora Woods—about 150 species found, with 88-89% native; large specimen trees, some uncommon; understory is beautiful and rich, with some garlic mustard starting to arrive;

Shimek Ravine—150 species found, with about 80% native; a few unusual nice plants found but some of the alien species may be difficult to control.

Adam Galluzzo, a graduate student in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Iowa, took a summer internship position with JCHT this year. Adam was energetic, knowledgeable and very productive-- we are hoping to find a suitable candidate for an internship again in 2006. Much of Adam's effort was focused on the Turkey Creek property (see article above), but he provided valuable assistance on several other properties as well. Adam integrated the photographs, written notes and GIS readings taken for the Natural Woodlands easement areas to provide the needed baseline documentation for our future monitoring of the properties. He prepared a document for the Natural Woodlands owners describing what conservation easements are, how these easements affect them, and the role of the Heritage Trust. Adam obtained detailed name and address information in areas surrounding a number of our properties, so that we could begin working more closely with our neighbors in joint conservation activities. He also created a "vision document" describing how Belgium Grove might be used as an outdoor classroom.

We are grateful for Adam's and Tom's assistance in caring and planning for Johnson County Heritage Trust properties.

David Curry



SAVE THE DATE!

The Annual Meeting of the Johnson County Heritage Trust will take place
at the Izaak Walton League south of Iowa City on April 29, 2006.



Volunteer Needs

The Johnson County Heritage Trust would like to thank all of our dedicated volunteers who have helped us reach our 2005 goals. We have the following needs for 2006:

Volunteer work crews for Big Grove and other properties,. We invite individuals to “adopt” one or more of our properties and help take responsibility for organizing work days.

Volunteers with expertise are needed to conduct easement property inspections on an annual basis.

Clerical assistance would be helpful, including assistance with bulk mailings.

Volunteer speakers for JCHT membership and outreach events.

We couldn't make the impact on Johnson County that we do without your help! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Tammy Richardson



Rally 2005!

On a glorious October weekend JCHT Administrator Tammy Richardson and Board members Dick Schwab and Mary Woolsey attended the National Land Conservation Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. In addition to a field trip to Lulu Lake and other inspiring Rally events, Tammy attended an exceedingly useful seminar on recordkeeping essentials and a number of workshops, including –very appropriately– “When All-Volunteer Land Trusts Hire Their First Staff,” “Recruiting and Managing Volunteers,” and a two-part workshop on fundraising.

Many presentations at the Rally emphasized the importance of the Land Trust Alliance's new Standards and Practices and encouraged land trusts to pursue accreditation as a means of ensuring good practices and establishing credibility with the public. In a variety of workshops, Dick and Mary gained greater appreciation of the importance of strategic conservation planning, establishing land protection criteria linked to the land trust's mission, and ensuring the resources not just to acquire but to provide appropriate stewardship for its properties and easements.

All three JCHT Rally attendees returned inspired, motivated, and better equipped to further our mission!

Mary Woolsey

The Johnson County Homestead Conservation Lottery 2006

Sponsored by the Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Lottery's purpose is to encourage and help acreage owners to develop and implement a realistic conservation plan integrating energy conservation, habitat, water quality, and erosion control components. Homeowners and non-profit organizations are encouraged to submit entries before January 31, 2006. The area included in the conservation plan must be between 2 and 10 acres. The top 5 entries will be displayed at Prairie Preview on March 7, 2006, and the winning entry will be selected by lottery drawing and announced that evening. The winner will receive cash, volunteer labor, education, and donated plants to implement their plan in the spring of 2006. To obtain the application package, contact Joy at the Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District (337-2322 extension 3) or visit www.jcswcd.org.

Please share this information with friends and neighbors!



Johnson County Heritage Trust Presents Prairie Preview XXIII

Prairie Preview XXIII will be held Tuesday, March 7, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. and will be dedicated to the late Richard (Sandy) Rhodes. The presentation, entitled, "Indiangrass Hills...A Conservation Legacy," will be given by this year's speaker, Mary Brown, assisted by Judy Felder, Barby Buss and Ellen Hartz - all of whom worked with Sandy on this 640-acre farm which they bought and have been restoring to native habitats.

Because it is such an important program for Johnson County residents interested in land preservation and restoration, Johnson County Heritage Trust has agreed to take over coordination of Prairie Preview from the Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District. The Prairie Preview program includes information and displays from local environmental organizations and agencies. Refreshments will be provided. If you would like further information please call Tammy Richardson at (319) 857-4741.

Prairie Preview XXIII will take place at Montgomery Hall, 4-H Fairgrounds, 4265 Oak Crest Hill Road S.E., (Old Highway 218 South), in Iowa City.

How to Reach Us

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