

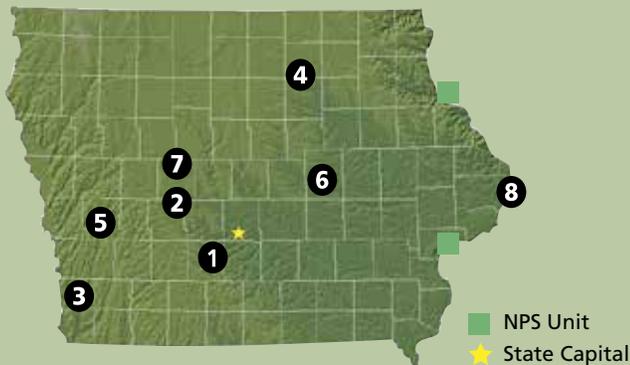


# Iowa News



Bicyclists enjoy one of Iowa's nearly 1800 miles of hard surface trails.  
Photo: NPS

## PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2014



### CURRENT PROJECTS

- 1. Cedar Lake Community Trail**  
City of Winterset, Iowa
- 2. Herndon to Coon Rapids Segment of the American Discovery Trail**  
Creating Great Places
- 3. Mills County, County-wide Trails System**  
Mills County Trail Committee
- 4. Fossil and Prairie Trail**  
Grow Rockford Together Association
- 5. Shelby County Trails**  
Shelby County Conservation Board
- 6. South Tama Trails**  
South Tama Trail Committee
- 7. Southern Prairie Pothole Wetland Expansion**  
Creating Great Places
- 8. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/MRT**  
Mississippi River Trail, Inc.

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

## Recent Successes

### A wetland that goes above and beyond.

The small southwest town of Elliott recently discovered that their drinking water supply may be in jeopardy. Elliott, like many Iowa communities, needs an ample supply of groundwater. Their wells however, are largely located in alluvial settings with large layers of sand and gravel under the surface left over from ancient rivers. Land use in this area has become predominantly row crop, as in many parts of Iowa. In highly susceptible areas, such as in Elliott, such crops can increase nitrate levels in shallow alluvial wells.

City officials decided that the development of a wetland with native grass buffer would provide an opportunity for surface water to be cleaned of nitrates prior to entering the groundwater system. As a result, the city negotiated the purchase of 17.3 acres and received 4.7 acres in donation for a total project size of 22 acres.

Through the collaborative efforts of many local, county, state, and federal entities, a 22-acre wetland project developed into much more. With the wetland's proximity to the town of Elliott and to the local elementary school, the design team on the project quickly saw the opportunity to develop this area into a conservation project and outdoor nature classroom.

The outdoor classroom area includes: an open-sided shelter with water and ADA tables, benches, and storage; a human sundial; education supplies; a windmill; butterfly gardens; a weather station; rock and brush piles; and crushed limestone and mowed grass trails. The teachers are committed to incorporating the wetland and native grass buffer with learning stations into their curriculums to enrich the experiential learning for the students.

# Current Projects

## 1. Cedar Lake Trail

Project Partner: City of Winterset  
NPS Contact: Brian Leaders  
Location: Winterset  
Congressional District: IA - 3

### Project Goal

Plan and construct a trail from the City of Winterset to Cedar Lake. Develop final plans for a community trails plan that incorporates the use of city streets, city sidewalks, and other trails to provide a safer, healthier, non-motorized route throughout the entire city. Next steps include the possible planning of a county-wide trails plan.

### NPS Role

Assist the city with multiple tasks including working together to gather trail stakeholders in an effort to develop a trails committee. Provide professional meeting facilitation services for the committee and for public involvement meetings to gain public input in regards to trail development. Provide concept planning assistance, technical assistance, and funding guidance.

## 2. Herndon to Coon Rapids Segment of the American Discovery Trail

Project Partner: Creating Great Places  
NPS Contact: Brian Leaders  
Location: Coon Rapids  
Congressional District: IA - 3

### Project Goal

Develop a 17-mile rails-to-trail conversion project that will revitalize an abandoned rail line through Northeast Guthrie County. Complete a much needed trails section that connects the City of Coon Rapids to the Racoon River Trail. This link will not only connect Coon Rapids to the Des Moines metropolitan area, it will also provide a connection to the T-Bone trail and on to the Wabash Trace in southwest Iowa, another step in completing a major national trail connection for the American Discover Trail.

### NPS Role

Facilitate private and public meetings, assist with mapping, identify sources of funding for the project, provide necessary technical assistance, and act as liaison with national partners.

## 3. Mills County, County-wide Trails System

Project Partner: Mills County Trail Committee  
NPS Contact: Brian Leaders  
Location: Mills County  
Congressional District: IA - 3

### Project Goal

Develop a county-wide trails plan that will link all of Mills County communities with a non-motorized trail system. Also, connect the existing Wabash Trace Nature Trail with the proposed county-wide trail system. This will provide many opportunities for the Wabash Trail users to visit these communities without leaving a trail.

### NPS Role

Provide technical assistance throughout the planning process, further develop the trails committee, gather stakeholders, and engage the communities in the development of a comprehensive county-wide trails plan. This plan will provide direction in future development, opportunities for health and wellness, and improvement of economic development in the county.

## 4. Fossil and Prairie Trail

Project Partner: Grow Rockford Together Association  
NPS Contact: Brian Leaders  
Location: Rockford  
Congressional District: IA - 4

### Project Goal

Complete a community-wide trail plan that connects Rockford to the nearly 400-acre Fossil and Prairie Park and its trail network.

### NPS Role

Assist in the development of a community-wide trail plan and help improve the trail system that connects the community to the Fossil and Prairie Park.

## 5. Shelby County Trails

Project Partner: Shelby County Conservation Board  
NPS Contact: Brian Leaders  
Location: Shelby County  
Congressional District: IA - 4

### Project Goal

Produce a comprehensive county-wide trails plan that can be used by the Shelby County Conservation Board and Board of Supervisors for future trail planning and development.

### NPS Role

Provide assistance to the Shelby County Conservation Board to develop a county-wide trails plan and a comprehensive map to be adopted by the county supervisors. The map will be used as a guidance tool when preparing budgetary reports and future development plans, which in turn can be used as fundraising tools to show the public the county's overall planning goals.

## 6. South Tama Trail

Project Partner: South Tama Trail Committee  
NPS Contact: Brian Leaders  
Location: Tama  
Congressional District: IA - 1

### Project Goal

Develop a trail plan that connects Tama to other surrounding communities.

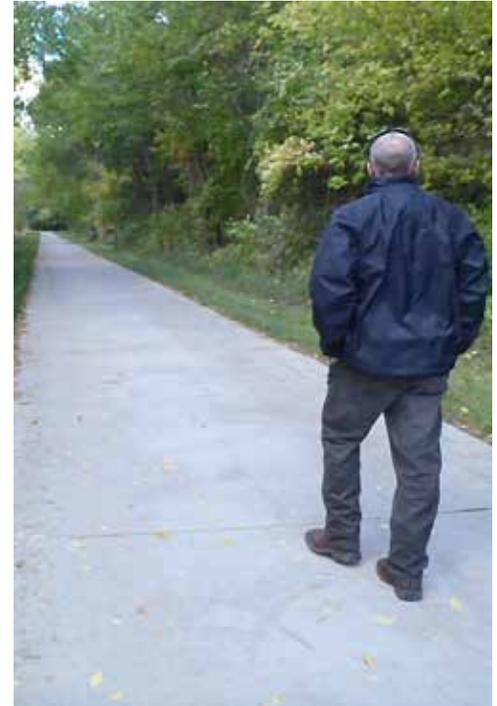
### NPS Role

Achieve a trail plan that meets the needs of the communities of Tama and Toledo, Iowa. Assist the steering committee in developing a trail plan that they can then use for fundraising and development planning.

# Current Projects cont.



A public listening session for a community trail planning effort, facilitated by NPS staff. These sessions are used to gather public input and information about the surrounding area. Photo: NPS



The State of Iowa has experienced great benefit from rail line abandonment. In many cases, rail-trails have been developed where other off-road trails may not have been possible. Photo: NPS

## 7. Southern Prairie Pothole Wetland Expansion

Project Partner: Creating Great Places  
NPS Contact: Brian Leaders  
Location: Coon Rapids  
Congressional District: 3, 4

### Project Goal

Expand Dunbar Slough by adding several additional acres of wetland and wildlife habitat.

### NPS Role

Assist the Creating Great Places committee in expanding the 2,134-acre Dunbar Slough to a 7,134-acre wetland and wildlife protection habitat area.

## 8. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trails, Inc.  
NPS Contact: Rory Robinson  
Location: Mississippi River, Source to Mouth  
Congressional Districts: IA - 1, 2, 4

### Project Goal

Outreach to local communities to encourage improvements to the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) for recreation, tourism, and community development; continued technical assistance in the development of the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative (MRCC) and increased long-term organizational viability; further develop the Mississippi River blueway portion of the trail system; and develop a geotourism initiative with the National Geographic Society.

### NPS Role

Assist the MRCC with organizational development, outreach to other organizations and agencies, and development and implementation of their strategic and operations plans. Increase the MRT's capacity to help develop water and land-based trails along the Mississippi River. Specifically, over the next year, assist the MRCC with the development of a sustainable destination tourism (geotourism) initiative in partnership with the National Geographic Society.



The benefit of rails-to-trail conversions can be seen beyond the human level. Wildlife and even native plants can reap the benefit of these corridor acquisitions. Photo: Wabash Nature Trail

## We're Here For You!

Could your project benefit from NPS Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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## 2013 Nationwide Partnership Success

1,357 Miles of Trail Developed  
736 Miles of River Conserved  
20,270 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

Find more information online at  
[www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)



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*“The Elliott wetland and outdoor classroom provides many benefits for the community: it improves water quality, provides outdoor education opportunities for families, creates opportunities for exercise and outdoor appreciation, encourages encourage healthy lifestyles, enhances quality of life, and improves wildlife habitat. Most of all, this project will provide a resource that Elliott can be proud of and often these types of projects lead to others that enhance the community further.”*

- Shirley Stout, Project Coordinator for Elliott Wetland Project



A bridge being installed in the Elliott, Iowa wetland and outdoor classroom project. This bridge was donated by a local government intenty and installed by a local contractor who donated his services. The bridge will act as a trail crossing over the water in addition to an educational platform for students to gather water samples and perform other research activities.

Photo by: Mayor Steve Howells

### ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. Program staff provide technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.