



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

What we
accomplished
with your support



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prrcd.org

3116 S Duff Ave Suite 201
Ames, IA 50010

Our Mission

TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH
THE RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION OF
IOWA'S CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We respect and elevate the integrity of the natural, historical, and cultural resources in Iowa and advocate for sustainability for present and future generations.

Advocate: We support ecological and natural resource integrity by advancing sustainable stewardship practices.

Partner: We engage and empower people and organizations with a diversity of skills and expertise to accomplish together more than we can do separately.

Educate: We foster the environment by learning and educating Iowans to activate and engage in cultivating an environment of conservation.

Assessment: We support a consistency of actions and methods through ongoing assessment of our programs.

Transparency: approaching opportunities and challenges with unbiased, candid, and open communication.

A WORD FROM OUR BOARD

On behalf of the Prairie Rivers of Iowa RC&D Board of Directors, we are pleased to share this Annual Report and to reaffirm Prairie Rivers of Iowa's continued commitment to conserving Iowa's natural and cultural heritage. The Board extends its sincere appreciation to our staff for their expertise, professionalism, and persistence, and to our members and donors whose support makes this work possible. We are also grateful to the many partners who collaborate with us to protect healthy ecosystems, strengthen local heritage, and promote resilient landscapes across Iowa.

As we look ahead, the Board remains focused on strong governance, fiscal responsibility, and long-term impact. Thank you for your continued engagement and support.



Reed Riskedahl
President



Rick Dietz
Vice President



Mark Rasmussen
Treasurer



Elaine Edwards
Secretary



Bob Ausberger



Jim Colbert



Doug Cooper



Rob Davis



Jeff Kopaska



Jim Richardson



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LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

GOALS

- Expansion of microbial source tracking
- Further development of the Prairie Seed Bank
- Implementation progress for both 10-year plans: Story County Water Monitoring Plan and Ames Pollinator Plan
- Oral history recording for former Niland's Café employees
- Secure grant funding for Interpretive Kiosks along the byways
- Development of the Lincoln Highway online App/Audio Tour
- Continued growth of public outreach and volunteer engagement

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jan 31st 3-5 pm: Seed Swap at Ames Public Library
- Feb 23rd: Presentation about our Native Seed Bank at the Nevada Public Library
- Apr 7th: Presentation about our Native Seed Bank at the Ames Public Library
- Jun 14th: A Celebration of the Reed-Niland Corner
- America's 250th: Showing of "Horatio's Drive" at historic theaters along the Lincoln Highway and the Jefferson Highway Heritage Byways.
- Sep: 4th annual Monarch Magic

THANK YOU!

We deeply appreciate each person who has donated to our organization over recent years. No matter the size of each donation, rest assured that we respect and value your gift. If you have indicated a desire to support a specific part of what we do, we have used that for the purpose you indicated. These gifts help us in a multitude of ways, and we honor all donations.

Volunteers are also very important to our work. The dozens of people who have given their volunteer time to Prairie Rivers are critical to our impact. Many of our events would not happen if it weren't for you! If you would like to volunteer in any way to assist us (social media, website assistance, news releases, newsletter assistance, or working with us during an outdoor activity), just drop a note to one of our staff or to executivedirector@prrcd.org.

We are looking forward to 2026 and cannot wait to share our journey with you!



WATER QUALITY

DAN HAUG, WATER QUALITY SPECIALIST

Clean water depends on clear information to guide land stewardship efforts at both the local and state level. Prairie Rivers of Iowa works closely with Story County Conservation and the City of Ames to monitor water quality in local rivers, make sense of the data, and provide opportunities for volunteers to get out on the water and make a difference. We educate people across the state about land and water with a mix of serious analysis and fun videos.

WATER MONITORING IN STORY COUNTY

- Published monthly water quality updates on 18 stream sites in Story County, including 10 sites that PRI monitors
- Analyzed volunteer data, lab results, and biological surveys and published a 40-page annual report
- Shared water quality data with the Iowa DNR for inclusion in the 2026 statewide assessment
- Organized quarterly meetings to coordinate monitoring with local partners and took field trips to see projects that are making a difference for water quality
- Created an interactive map to share results from water quality "snapshot" events in both Polk and Story counties

ANALYSIS OF WATER DATA FROM ACROSS IOWA

- Used fertilizer data to compare nitrogen application rates to recommendations, and estimated the impact of nitrogen rates on water quality
- Compared bacteria data from Iowa lakes and rivers to global benchmarks
- Evaluated progress metrics for the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy
- Analyzed seasonal water quality patterns in the Raccoon River
- Contributed figures to the Central Iowa Source Water Resource Assessment



EVENTS

- Handled registration for PACRAT (Paddle and Cleanup Rivers Around Town) on May 3rd
 - 33 volunteers removed 3,200 pounds of trash from Ioway Creek!
- Prepared kits and trained student volunteers to test water quality at multiple sites in Ames as part of a multi-county spring snapshot event on May 20th
- Organized two fall volunteer events to test dissolved oxygen and survey invertebrates
- Joined a panel discussion in Cedar Rapids to share lessons from the Story County monitoring program
- Gave presentations to the 4H Fishing Club, Iowa Project AWARE, Story County Master Gardens, watershed management authorities, a sustainable agriculture class at ISU, and the League of Women Voters

"Phenomenal presentation."

**Dr. Lee Burras,
Iowa State University**



"WE CANNOT IMMUNIZE THE CONTINENTS AND THE OCEANS AGAINST OUR CONTEMPT FOR SMALL PLACES AND SMALL STREAMS. SMALL DESTRUCTIONS ADD UP, AND FINALLY THEY ARE UNDERSTOOD COLLECTIVELY AS LARGE DESTRUCTIONS."

- WENDELL BERRY



OUTREACH

- Produced "Our Nitrogen Moment," a series of 12 short videos about the nitrogen cycle. Three of the videos received over 700 views on YouTube
- Produced a rapid-response video explaining high nitrate levels affecting Des Moines-area drinking water (800+ Instagram views).
- Published 11 articles about water on our Conservation Connection Blog



POLLINATOR CONSERVATION

KATELYN RINICKER

POLLINATOR CONSERVATION SPECIALIST

Prairie Rivers of Iowa coordinates the Ames 10-Year Pollinator Plan and guides its implementation. In 2025, we expanded resources, education, and community participation in pollinator habitat restoration.

SEED BANK LAUNCH

- Launched the Prairie Seed Bank in August, offering over 30 native plant species sourced from commercial producers and local habitats. Seeds are weighed, labeled, and made available for a free-will donation.
- Though separate from the Ames Pollinator Plan, it is a powerful complementary resource, giving residents an accessible way to plant quality habitat.

HABITAT & FIELD DAYS

- Improved prairies on private lands, including preparation and seeding at the Brandrup property
- Tabled at events such as EcoVision and Nevada PTA STEAM Night
- Helped host/plan field days
 - Prairie seeding with Boone SWCD and NRCS
 - Seed harvest with Project Wingspan and Story County Conservation

MONARCH MAGIC EVENT

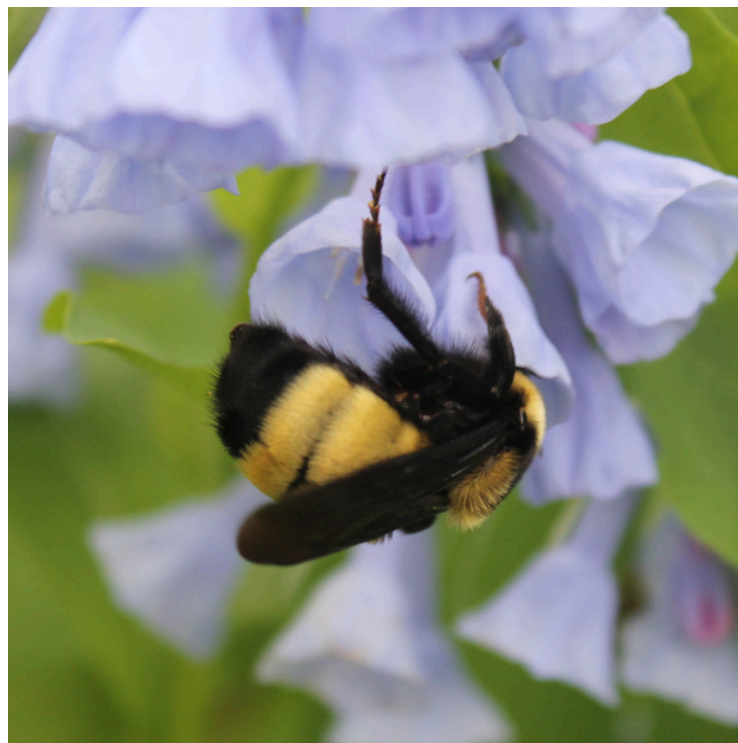
- PRI organized the third annual Monarch Magic at Ada Hayden Heritage Park on Sep 6th
- 100 attendees
- 14 partner organizations
- 20 volunteers contributed 80 hours
- 69 books given away by Raising Readers
- Shifted from monarch tagging to iNaturalist observations due to low populations and concerns about handling the few wild monarchs caught



POLLINATOR FRIENDLY AMES

PRI facilitates this volunteer group and works closely with the City of Ames to implement the Ames Pollinator Friendly Plan.

- Decided on an official logo and sticker
- Designed a brochure with general information
- Created Webpages to help distribute resources to accomplish plan goals
- Created a Pesticide Free Pledge, Pollinator Habitat Report form, and a Pollinator Self-Survey
- Designed many educational materials, including a How-to Guide, Top 12 Pollinator Plants, and Invasive Plants flyer
- Created an iNaturalist project for the Ames area to record observational data on pollinators



"YOU CANNOT GET THROUGH A SINGLE DAY WITHOUT HAVING AN
IMPACT ON THE WORLD AROUND YOU. WHAT YOU DO MAKES A
DIFFERENCE, AND YOU HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT KIND OF DIFFERENCE
YOU WANT TO MAKE."

-JANE GOODALL



OUTREACH

- Jan 22nd Hosted Webinar with guest speaker Sarah Nizzi, a Pollinator conservation Specialist with the Xerces Society. 30 Attendees across Iowa attended.
- Mar 15th presented at the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association Winter Seminar. 30 people attended
- Apr 8th presented to the Women in Natural Resources club at Kirkwood College
- Attended trainings include
 - Watershed Academy
 - Iowa Prairie Network Winter Seminar
 - Best Practices for Pollinators

BLOG HIGHLIGHTS

- Don't Pull Those Weeds
- Thirsty Wings
- Native Plant Sensory Garden
- Interview with a Botanical Artist



BYWAYS: LANDSCAPE, HISTORY, & CULTURE

JEANIE HAU, BYWAYS COORDINATOR

Prairie Rivers of Iowa manages both the Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway, a National Scenic Byway and Iowa Valley Scenic Byway, supporting historic preservation, tourism, interpretation, and community storytelling.

NEW FUNDING

- \$5,000 from Iowa Historical Society Inc. to begin a full inventory of the Lincoln Highway Museum in Grand Junction
- \$5,000 from Dean J. King Family Foundation toward a three-kiosk byways project in the community of Logan.
- \$500 from Discover Ames for "A Celebration of the Reed-Niland Corner" event

TRAVELING EXHIBIT

- Continued to tour the audiovisual exhibition telling the story of the national Lincoln Highway, "Promise Road: How the Lincoln Highway Changed America," to libraries and museums. Exhibit available upon request.

INTERPRETATION, MAPPING, & SIGNAGE

- Completed the Survey of National Historic Register Sites along the Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway. Pdf is available on website.
- Built an Online App for Iowa Valley Scenic Byway Audio Tour
- Updated the byways route maps in ArcGIS Pro and shared updates with the Iowa DOT.
- Created a "My Google Map" for Lincoln Highway website with construction detours.

PRESERVATION

- Continued to support the city of Tama in preserving the Lincoln Highway Bridge
- Filmed and edited the Reed Station Oral/Video History Project. A pilot "Tales on the byway" can be seen at: <https://youtu.be/JpqMf-txNDE>
- Helped establish the Reed-Niland Corner, Inc., non-profit to assume ownership and operation of the historic café, motel, museum, and apartment complex.
- Working with SHPO and Preservation Consultants for nominating the Reed-Niland Corner for a National Designation.

SEEDLING MILE PROJECT LINN COUNTY

- Worked with County Engineers, County Conservation, and County Historic Preservation Commission to replace signs marking the Seedling Mile Begin and End signs, making the roadway safer.
- Currently working on an Iowa DOT project to replace the existing Seedling Mile Interpretive sign at the Abbe Creek School Museum rest area. Working with the Linn County Historic Preservation Commission and the County Conservation Department. The kiosks will expand on Lincoln Highway information and things to do in Linn County. A Seedling Mile monument will be relocated to this location as well.



**"THE STRUGGLE OF TODAY IS NOT ALTOGETHER FOR TODAY-IT IS FOR A VAST FUTURE ALSO."
ABRAHAM LINCOLN**



OUTREACH

- Social Media: Weekly "Where Was I on the byway?" and "Where Was I on the App?"; Freedom Rocks Along the Lincoln Highway Tour
- Monthly contribution to the statewide Iowa Byways Newsletter
- Promoted byways at the Travel Iowa- Iowa State Fair Booth
- National and State Lincoln Highway Association involvement: Iowa Caravan Tour, Route Changes Task Force, Historic Resources Committee, and Membership Assistance
- Presentations:
 - Presented on the Survey Study of National Historic Register Sites at the Preserve Iowa Summit alongside Shellie Orngard
 - Presentation of "A Freedom Rock Tour" for the Central Iowa Tractor Club.



PRAIRIE *of Iowa* RIVERS

BE PART OF OUR STORY



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PRAIRIE RIVERS OF IOWA



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IOWA VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY



IOWA VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY



LINCOLN HIGHWAY HERITAGE BYWAY - A NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY



LINCOLN HIGHWAY HERITAGE BYWAY - A NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

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