

The Iowa Report 2008



Richard (Rich) Leopold, Director
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
502 East 9th Street
Wallace Building – 4th Floor
Des Moines, IA 50319
<http://www.iowadnr.com/index.html>

Rich Leopold was named Director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources on January 12, 2007, and appointed and confirmed by a unanimous vote of the Iowa State Senate in April, 2007. Director Leopold, along with the more than 1,000 fulltime and seasonal employees and a \$150 million budget, is responsible for maintaining state parks and forests, protecting the environment, and managing energy, fish, wildlife, and land and water resources in Iowa. Director Leopold promotes three core beliefs for the DNR: 1. Focus on the Resource, 2. Coach for Compliance, and 3. Foster Local Leadership.

The DNR's Mission:

To conserve and enhance our natural resources in cooperation with individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life for Iowans and ensure a legacy for future generations.

Sustainable Natural Resource Funding

In May 2008, Iowa moved one step closer to earmarking funding for natural resources when our legislature passed Senate Joint Resolution 2002. This bill requests the constitutional protection of 3/8 of one cent of Iowa's sales tax for natural resources. In Iowa, a constitutional amendment needs to pass two different General Assemblies before it can go to a vote of the people, which can occur as early as 2010. If the people pass the initiative, the 3/8 of a cent tax would occur the next time there is a sales tax increase.

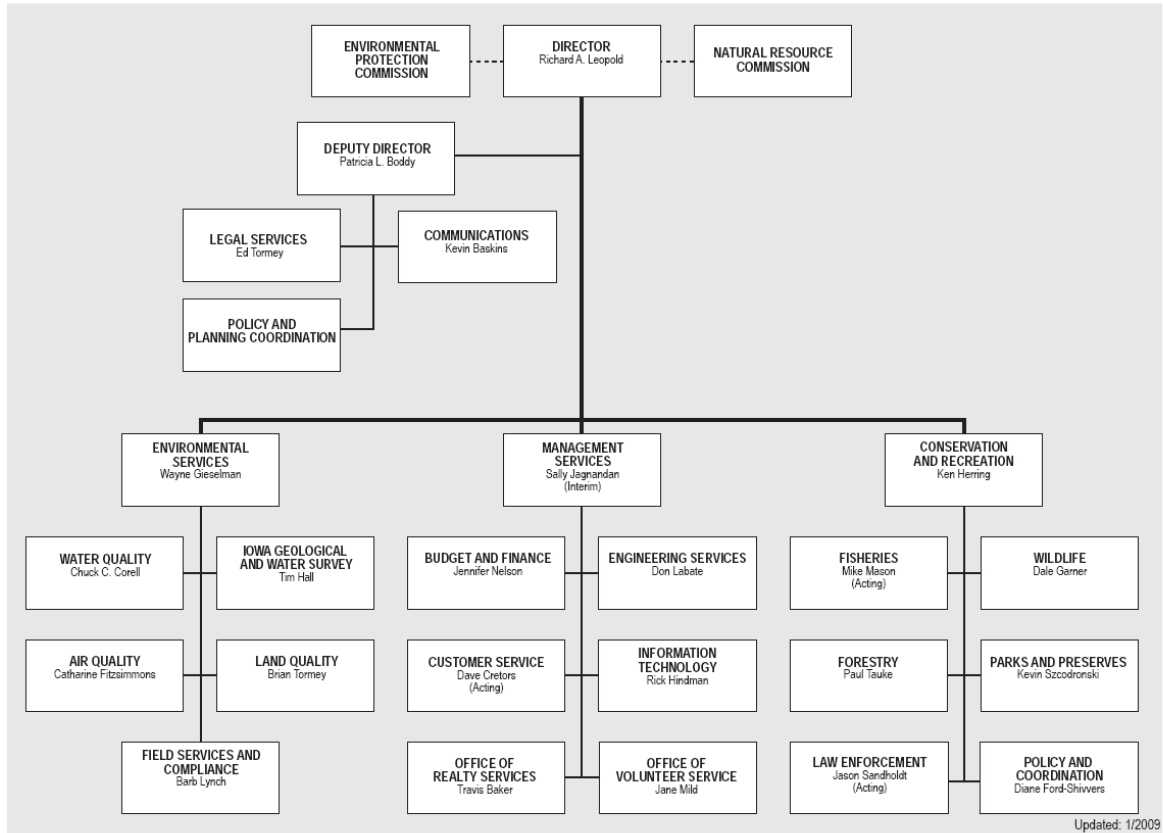
Many states have spent years to get to this point. Iowa has been very lucky in its leadership who understand the comprehensive value natural resources bring to the state. In 2006, our forward thinking legislators proposed and supported the concept of sustainable funding by requesting diverse organizations to an Advisory Committee, which was an indicator that this is an important issue for all of Iowa. This importance remained evident in the legislative voting that occurred during this legislative session and the reauthorization of the Advisory Committee.

As we move forward on this issue, there is still much work that needs to be done. Legislators are requesting and need to hear from Iowans the value that would be brought to our great state if there was a sustainable funding source for our natural resources.

(In January 2009, legislators introduced and voted on House Joint Resolution-1 as the second passage of bill language – which passed both the House and Senate overwhelmingly. With this approval, the language is anticipated to go on the election ballot in November 2010 for a vote of the people.)

The Department of Natural Resources – Conservation and Recreation Division:

Department of Natural Resources



The Conservation and Recreation Division is organized into a Policy and Coordination Section and five bureaus: Fisheries, Forestry, Law Enforcement, Parks, and Wildlife. The Division welcomed Ken Herring as the Administrator in June 2005. Herring had worked in the wildlife bureau for nearly 30 years and, prior to his appointment as Administrator, was the wildlife management supervisor.

[Fisheries \(http://www.iowadnr.com/fish/index.html\)](http://www.iowadnr.com/fish/index.html)

Lake Restoration Program

The intent of the Iowa Lake Restoration Program is to develop and administer lake/watershed projects that foster a community commitment to lake and watershed protection, provide significant improvement to the quality of Iowa lakes and ensure a cost-effective investment for the State of Iowa. This restoration program was significantly expanded in 2005 with up to \$9 million dollars of general fund appropriations annually available. Project planning includes working with local communities to develop a joint restoration plan. Watershed partnerships are formed with diverse interest groups; and are the foundation to the programs success. The restoration process requires that an assessment of the lake and its watershed be conducted to

provide feasible restoration alternatives that will meet water quality goals. Reductions in phosphorus and sediment delivery coming from the watershed must be controlled before in-lake restoration can begin. Lake restoration/watershed activities are in progress at 19 lakes throughout the state and either in planning or initial community outreach at an additional 16 lakes. An annual report is presented to the legislature each year that outlines current activities and provides a suggested work plan for the coming year. This report and other restoration activities can be viewed at: <http://iowadnr.gov/water/lakerestoration/>.

Shallow Lakes Initiative

Most of Iowa's shallow lakes are located in the prairie pothole region of northwest and north central Iowa. Many of these lakes have a maximum depth of 6 to 8 feet and are too shallow to be consistently good lakes, however too deep to be consistently good marshes. They are difficult to manage for water quality and often exist in a turbid water state. When they exist in that condition they are characterized by turbid water, little to no aquatic vegetation, limited emergent vegetation, a poor fishery dominated by carp and bullheads, and limited waterfowl production and hunting opportunities. In an attempt to better manage and utilize these resources, Iowa DNR Fisheries and Wildlife Bureaus have partnered with Ducks Unlimited and initiated a shallow lakes initiative. Biomanipulation and water level management (drawdown) are currently being utilized to renovate several shallow lakes. The goal is to "flip" these water bodies to the clear water state which is typified by clear water, abundant aquatic vegetation, emergent vegetation, a desirable fishery dominated by northern pike, yellow perch, bluegills, and largemouth bass, and enhanced waterfowl production and hunting opportunities. A number of study lakes are in different phases of renovation.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

In Iowa a portion of boat registration fees are used to administer and enforce programs to control aquatic invasive species (AIS). Priority AIS species in Iowa are Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, Asian carps, brittle naiad, and purple loosestrife. The goals of the Iowa AIS program are to minimize the risk of AIS introductions into the state, limit the spread of established populations of AIS, and to eradicate or control AIS infestations. In 2008 we conducted 3,145 watercraft inspections contacting over 9,100 people, supported 14 new and ongoing partnerships, leased 9 billboards with AIS preventative messages, direct mailed AIS information to over 265,000 registered boat owners, established a volunteer watercraft inspection program in the Iowa Great Lakes, chemically treated five water bodies infested with AIS, surveyed aquatic vegetation in 78 water bodies, reached statewide audiences through news releases, radio, TV, and presentations, and placed zebra mussel settlement samplers. The statewide AIS program is led by two full-time Fisheries Bureau employees.

VHS surveillance

In 2008 we sampled fish for VHS from many of our public and private fish hatcheries and from our rivers. No samples taken from any location in Iowa tested positive for VHS. Sampling costs were picked up by a grant from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Hatchery Production

Iowa's unique program of intensively culturing walleyes in covered raceways with submerged lighting during the habituation (feeding) phase was a great success this year. Over 200,000

walleyes over 7.5 inches in length were stocked in Iowa lakes from our Rathbun and Spirit Lake hatcheries. Recent advances in artificial feeding techniques have increased the numbers and reliability of producing muskellunge yearlings in Iowa. Currently, our muskellunge populations are experiencing the highest level of recruitment ever recorded. These high recruitment levels are the sole result of stocking yearling muskellunge in the spring. Our adult muskellunge populations in Iowa are in great shape providing the Iowa angler a unique opportunity to catch a trophy fish.

Forestry (<http://www.iowadnr.com/forestry/index.html>):

The Bureau has 29 foresters among the 46 full-time and 9 part-time staff and operates the State Forest Nursery. Iowa's state forest system is comprised of 46,000 acres in four large state forests and 6 smaller units. Oaks, hickories, maples, ashes, hackberries and cottonwood are the dominant species in Iowa forests.

Private Forestland Owner Assistance

Forestry staff provided assistance to 1,799 landowners who owned 53,986 forested acres, increased new forest plantings by 4,384 acres, and assisted private forest landowners with forest stand improvement on 8,553 acres. Foresters also assisted Iowa private landowners with sustainable timber sales on 1,954 acres annually, providing more than 2.52 million board feet of timber for local wood industry and \$1,382,160 to Iowa woodland owners. Foresters also wrote 1,532 forest and tree planting plans on 35,018 acres. Foresters also held 183 programs that were attended by 7,125 people. Private lands foresters continued to work with Division wildlife biologists to develop Forest Wildlife Management plans for state Wildlife Management Areas. They also provided technical assistance to NRCS, FSA & IDALS on EQIP, WHIP, CRP and REAP forestry practices.

Urban/Community Forestry Assistance

Urban forestry assistance was provided to 500 communities. There were 114 communities designated as a Tree City USA and 45 one day tree care workshops provided. The "Operation ReLeaf," partnership with Alliant Energy sold locally purchased landscape trees worth more than \$500,000 to 5,700 Alliant Energy customers to help reduce energy costs. A similar partnership was started with MidAmerican Energy called "Plant Some Shade." This program provided locally purchased landscape trees to 2,510 MidAmerican Energy customers worth \$300,500. Special projects were also completed in the tornado damaged communities of Fruitland, Muscatine and Grandview. Over 200 trees were planted in these communities.

Forest Health Monitoring and Management

Foresters continued to monitor for serious insect, disease, invasive plant species, and environmental problems on Iowa's Forestland. Aerial surveys of 1,160,979 acres were conducted to determine potential forest health problems. Ground confirmations were conducted to resolve any issues identified in the aerial survey. Bureau foresters worked with impacted landowners on appropriate salvage and reforestation efforts in areas with oak wilt, Dutch elm disease, oak tatters, aspen decline, Tubakia (leaf fungi on bur oak), and flood damage. In cooperation with the State Entomologist of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the USDA, the Forestry Bureau assisted in contracting, placing, and monitoring of 4,732 gypsy moth traps in 99 counties and Yellow River State Forest. As a result, new efforts are underway working with

the USDA Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread Program for the 2009 trapping season. Foresters continued monitoring for symptoms associated with the exotic insect pest Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). A total of 235 high risk sites in 55 counties were identified and 1,269 ash trees were inspected for the presence of EAB. In addition, a total of 401 sentinel trap trees were established in high risk campgrounds during the spring and bark peeled in the fall to check for the presence on EAB larvae. A new study utilizing a herbicide associated with oak tatters was conducted and found that the chemical Acetachlor replicated oak tatters symptoms in a greenhouse at an application rate of 1/1000th the labeled rate. Further research will be conducted to determine the effects of oak tatters on Iowa's oak resource. New forest health efforts involving invasive woodland plant species, white oak decline, Tubakia issues, walnut yellows, and hickory decline were initiated in cooperation with Iowa State University to document locations and severity. *A record number of 626 male gypsy moths were captures in 2008.*

State Forests Land Management

Iowa's state forest system of 45,000 acres is comprised of four large state forests: Yellow River (NE), Stephens (SC), Shimek (SE) and Loess Hills (W), and range in size from 8,500 to nearly 15,000 acres and 6 smaller units. These areas are some of the largest contiguous tracts of public forest land in Iowa. They are demonstration areas for sustainable management practices that yield forest products, wildlife habitat, soil and water protection, protection of unique plant and animal communities and outdoor recreational opportunities. They are the backbone of several of Iowa's Bird Conservation Areas (BCAs). Area foresters have completed Forest Management Plans on each forest to improve management, to identify and protect sensitive areas and to track forestry practices. Iowa's State Forests provided 35,000 board feet of lumber to state agencies worth \$52,000. Forests sold 297,047 board-feet of timber to local wood industries providing \$142,062 in 2008 to assist with managing the State Forests. Area foresters also completed 679 acres of forest stand improvement, 17,120 acres of forest inventories, 64 acres of reforestation, 2,917 acres of native prairie management, and conducted 18 educational programs in 2008.

State Forest Nursery

The Iowa State Forest Nursery grew and distributed 1.7 million bare root conservation tree and shrub seedlings to private landowners and government agencies. In cooperation with the IA Department of Corrections Rockwell City and Fort Madison facilities, Nursery operations run on the costs of production and do not use any general tax funds. In addition, sales of conservation seedlings produce enough revenue to fund two additional foresters who provide assistance to private landowners.

Tree Improvement

An effort to maintain a pool of genetically diverse tree material has been started. The Forestry Bureau is preserving the best genes from black walnut our most economically valuable tree species. Preserving the best genes adapted to Iowa's climate and soils, will allow for propagation and distribution of native, high quality seedlings through the State Forest Nursery in the future. During 2007 & 2008, there were 18 black walnut trees selected and preserved.

Testing for a fast growing black walnut tree that can grow above competing vegetation to capture the site quickly and rise above wildlife browsing has been underway since 2003. The best tree has shown growth of almost 9 feet in 2 years and 25 feet in 5 years. This tree is being reproduced and tested in field trials to see how it performs as a grafted tree under various growing

conditions. Preserving native butternut trees through propagation to prevent the loss of this tree species in Iowa has been happening since 2005. There have been 20 butternuts from Iowa that have been preserved along with over 100 other clones from other states at Loess Hills State Forest. These same seedlings are being tested for resistance to butternut canker at Yellow River State Forest, where the canker causing disease still persists.

Fire Program

The Forestry Bureau has provided more than \$16 million worth of excess military vehicles and equipment to many of Iowa's 870 volunteer fire departments for rural fire protection efforts. Annually, more than 30,000 pieces of "Smokey Bear" fire prevention materials and costumes were distributed to rural fire departments to expand youth and adult education. A program, initiated in 2004 and running through 2008, to help rural communities establish "dry" hydrants to assist in times of fire emergencies, was able to assist with the installation of 70 dry hydrants throughout the state.

The Bureau's fire program in cooperation with other federal, state and county agencies to provide both generalized and National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG) Certified training. In 2007 and 2008 the fire program staff held 56 training courses, training 1162 students. Those students in turn have invested 14,833 hours of their time in wildland fire, prescribed fire and associated leadership training. Fire staff also assisted with the mobilization of trained and qualified wildland firefighters to assist on national project fires. In 2008, 23 individuals were mobilized on 31 national fire assignments. The following table represent fires reported (on non-federal lands) in 2008.

| 2008 FIRES REPORTED | # of Fires | # of Acres |
|------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Wildland Fires | 196 | 2375.22 |
| Prescribed Fires: | 155 | 7809.49 |
| TOTAL REPORTED: | 351 | 10184.71 |

Law Enforcement (<http://www.iowadnr.com/law/index.html>):

The Law Enforcement Bureau ended the 2008 calendar year with eight (8) vacant positions. This included the Chief's position (Chief Lowell Joslin retired effective December 26th), two district supervisor positions, and five (5) conservation officer field positions. These positions are being left vacant in an effort to satisfy an increasing budget shortfall. By early 2009, we are looking at a 12% budget cut in each of our Division Bureau's.

Our legislative package for the upcoming 2009 session includes proposals for better defining residency requirements for the purchase of hunting/fishing licenses, revamping language in our commercial fishing regulations, and requesting authority for the Department to enter into agreements with our neighboring states related to hunting reciprocity issues.

Our officers spent a great deal of time this year with emergency response related to extensive flooding, tornadoes and several major train derailments around the state.

Our electronic dock registration system is getting ever closer to being finalized and implemented. This has been a long and arduous process but will help us in serving our public and will allow them to register and manage their docks electronically. We are also field testing a program

called TraCs (Traffic and Criminal Software). This program will allow our field officers to submit reports, activity reports, accident reports, and time sheets electronically into a database. This system will also allow them to submit citations electronically directly to the court. Our field testing should be completed by late summer. The TraCs program is used by the majority of enforcement agencies in Iowa and can provide a method to communicate between agencies.

During the 2008 legislative session, we finally got a mandatory life jacket law for children that requires children under age thirteen to wear a life jacket while in a boat that is underway. Iowa was only one of three states that did not have some form of such a law. This law went into effect on May 10th, 2008.

We certified two officers with the North American Cooperative Shotgun Education Program (CONCEP). They are now conducting workshops around the state to our staff to familiarize them with the program and to train instructors. The program focuses on dispelling the myths of steel shot and is intended to reduce bird crippling losses. During 2009 this program will be rolled out to the public.

Our partnership between the Department and Pheasants Forever is flourishing. In 2008, the PF Youth Education Committee Chairs from around the country came to Iowa for their annual meeting. Our staff assisted in instructing sessions on how to effectively set up mentored youth hunts. This method is now being used as a nation-wide model.

In 2008 our shooting sports program began an invitational league for the High School Trap and Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP). This allowed students to participate in several local and regional events prior to competing at the state event. This league has allowed several schools to incorporate the program as a letter sport since the students are participating in an actual season prior to the state event. In 2009 we will be applying this season template to our Archery in the Schools Program.

Parks (<http://www.iowadnr.gov/parks/index.html>):

Iowa has 85 state park properties totaling approximately 60,000 acres, attracting 14 million visitors a year, including 650,000 overnight campers. Forty-eight parks have full-time employees comprised of park rangers, park managers, and natural resource technicians. Iowa does not have any national parks or national forests, so tourists seeking natural and scenic areas most often find themselves in a state park.

Storm Damage in Iowa State Parks 2008

Iowa has 85 state park properties totaling approximately 60,000 acres, attracting 14 million visitors annually, including 650,000 overnight campers. In 2008, Iowa was devastated by natural disasters state-wide. Thirty-two state parks realized damage from flooding and tornadic activity estimated at \$3.3 million and a revenue loss of \$1.1 million. However, approximately half of this loss was recovered due to an excellent fall season in state parks. Due to the magnitude and extent of the damage statewide, Governor Culver requested and received 90% cost-share from FEMA rather than the traditional 75%.

Agreement with Department of Public Health

The Parks, Fisheries, and Wildlife Bureaus are developing an alliance with the Iowa Department of Public Health (DPH) to promote life style changes that make for healthier Iowans and identify other state agencies that can play an important role in this cause. The primary goal is to provide information to health professionals and the general public on the roles and benefits that outdoor recreation activities have on providing healthier Iowans. The DNR and DPH are working with eight of Iowa's 17 Councils of Government to develop ways to transpose this state level alliance to local areas where on-the-ground implementation really occurs. Conferences, workshops, and field days are being designed for participants to better understand and realize the benefits of working together to create productive, action-oriented local alliances for healthier Iowans of all ages.

Honey Creek Resort State Park

Iowa's first resort state park opened in September 2008. The resort is located on the banks of Rathbun Lake, which is a Corps of Engineers reservoir in southeast Iowa. The main facility on the property is the Lodge which features 105 motel rooms, restaurant, conference center, and indoor water park. The property also features The Preserve, an 18-hole golf course, 37 luxury cabins, 20-site full hook-up campground, and 10 miles of nature trails, marina, and a boat ramp. A full slate of interpretive programs and special events are provided to resort guests with fun and informative ways to enjoy the outdoors.

Wildlife (<http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/index.html>):

Private Lands Program

Private Lands Program staff provided assistance to 1,799 landowners providing habitat improvement recommendations on 91,177 acres of which 35,434 acres of those recommendations were implemented. This includes 2,670 acres of wetland restoration, 22,502 acres of prescribed fire through assistance with writing burn plans, 3,400 acres of grassland CRP practices, and 6,873 of other wildlife habitat improvements. Biologists presented 58 public programs contacting over 3,400 people.

Wildlife Action Plan

The Iowa Wildlife Action Plan was approved by a national review team in 2006. It has now become a guiding document for the Wildlife Bureau and other DNR bureaus, as well as several partner conservation agencies and private organizations. The Plan identifies 999 Iowa wildlife species and their habitats, of which 296 vertebrates and invertebrates are considered Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Also included are "Visions," or 25-year goals, derived from extensive public input during Plan preparation. A Multi-Species Inventory and Monitoring Program, described in the Plan, has been carried out for 3 field seasons. The Wildlife Action Plan Manager has put together an Implementation Committee and multiple associated working groups and subcommittees including representatives from USFWS, USACE, NRCS, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, educational institutions, and county conservation boards. The Plan also now serves as the basis for all State Wildlife Grant funded projects in Iowa so that these projects are assured of helping achieve Plan goals.

Chronic Wasting Disease

In 2008– 2009 Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) staff collected brainstems and medial retropharyngeal lymph nodes from 4,171 (4,145 not detected, 26 unusable, 52 targeted, 8% road kills, 31% adult males) wild and 412 captive whitetail deer, 9 captive elk, 3 free-ranging ear-tagged elk and 1 sitka deer for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing. All samples were submitted to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa. The majority of samples (62%) from wild deer were collected during the fall firearms season from seven counties in northeast Iowa (Fig. 1), the area closest to the Wisconsin and Illinois CWD outbreaks (Fig 2.). Since 2003, Iowa has tested 29,725 wild deer and 1,563 captive deer and elk. To date, testing on all samples (wild and captive) has been completed using immunohistochemistry and all usable samples tested thus far are negative for presence of PrP protein.

Feral Hogs

Since fall 2003, 155 wild hogs in Iowa have been killed by vehicles, hunters, and/or captured through IDNR staff trapping efforts in 12 different counties. Blood and tissue samples from more than 85 captured wild hogs have been tested for swine brucellosis and pseudorabies and thus far, all samples have been negative. This past year has been quiet. There were sightings in only two counties - Jackson County had one hog that was killed and it is believed that this may have been a rodeo escapee. Webster County was added as a new area, three hogs were killed and the area was investigated and resolved. Currently, there are no established populations in the state. The IDNR continues to educate the citizens of Iowa by doing press releases, presentations and radio programs. We continue to send a consistent message to completely eradicate feral hogs in the state. We are working one-on-one with landowners when needed and are not encouraging hunting. Legislation passed in 2007 listing feral hogs as dangerous animals. Hunting preserves holding feral hogs are allowed to harvest what they have on hand but no additional animals may be purchased and no breeding may take place at these facilities or elsewhere in the state.

Acquisition

The Wildlife Bureau currently manages more than 358,000 acres of public fish and wildlife lands, which includes approximately 90,000 acres of Army Corps of Engineer reservoir land and 25,000 acres of Waterfowl Production Area land owned by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. In Fiscal Year 2008, the Fish & Wildlife Service purchased 304 acres of land in north-central Iowa that will be managed by the Wildlife Bureau. The Wildlife Bureau also purchased 4,364 acres of land with an appraised value of \$17.1 million, of which 70% of this cost was from federal cost-sharing and funding from Wildlife Bureau partners.

Seed Harvest Program/Prairie Resource Team

The Iowa DNR Prairie Resource Team provided seed for over 1820 acres of DNR managed land in 2008. Native reconstructions included 10,920 pounds of native grass and 3640 pounds of native wildflower seed. All seed is Iowa Ecotype. The conservative value of this seed totals \$450,000. These reconstructions provide excellent habitat for game birds and many other grassland wildlife species, improves water quality, and puts color and diversity into the landscape of our state managed lands.