



## Iowa Heartland Resource Conservation & Development, Inc.

### *Thinking Forward ... A 2015 Annual Report*

*Our mission is to enhance our rural areas and local communities by facilitating grassroots efforts & partnerships for conservation and sustainable development.*

*Founded in 1994, the Iowa Heartland Resource, Conservation & Development, Inc. (IHRC&D) is organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit serving the counties of Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Polk and Warren counties.*

## Thinking Forward.

This is how we began.

This is how we advance.

In 1994, Iowa Heartland Resource Conservation & Development (IHRC&D) was created and authorized by the Department of Agriculture. The vision was simple but powerful – to accelerate the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, improve the economic activity and enhance the environment and standard of living for our area.

We set the highest standards to serve the people and our communities whereby we can realize this vision. When we serve our constituents well, we create an environment for the best possible outcomes. And most importantly, our rural areas thrive.

Our founding members envisioned an enduring, vital and vibrant organization. Today, we continue the journey we began over twenty years ago. Come, and THINK FORWARD with us!

### **Executive Director's Message**

It has been an exciting year with a number of accomplishments met. One reason for these accomplishments is our emphasis on being a listening organization. From the numerous workshops related to the trail plans to the listening sessions held for the arts, cultural and historic organizations and societies, we engaged our citizens and asked for your ideas, suggestions and concerns as never before. While I was on the road meeting with so many of you, I always came away with great feedback, ideas and suggestions myself!

This in turn has helped Iowa Heartland RC&D become a better organization. In reviewing our "charter," we have always been about local people solving local problems. As a document from the NARC&D puts it best -

"Local people know what is best for their communities. That is the core premise of the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program and the key to its success. The RC&D Program provides a development process that is unique in that it is driven by a passion to mobilize local, state and national resources to address economic, social, and environmental and quality of life issues on the ground where those issues occur. Often that ground is rural America and the partnerships formed are rooted in the communities being served. The hallmark of the program is its diversity and scope. They identify the challenges their communities are facing, forge partnerships to take on those challenges... and solve them."

It has truly been a pleasure and joy to meet so many of you. You have our continued commitment to work and engage you in this process as we make our region even better!

Sheila R. Navis, CAE

Executive Director

## **Engaging our communities in an ongoing conversation**

Efforts continued on two grants from the National Park Service which were awarded in the Fall 2014 to develop master concept trail plans for Jasper, Madison, Marion and Warren Counties. Meetings were held throughout 2015, with over 268 people participating. They shared their ideas and recommendations as to locations for future trails.

In addition, this project has been extended for another year that will provide the respective advisory committees opportunities for additional discussion, review and consensus building.



A grant awarded in 2014 from the Iowa League of RC&D's continued into 2015. The focus shifted from developing an inventory of arts, cultural and historical institutions to establishing the Regional Cultural Council for Central Iowa. Several listening sessions were held in Pella, Perry and Winterset that focused on identifying issues, concerns and needs for their organizations. From this information, other surveys and conversations, IHRC&D will be in a position to develop a Two Year Plan for the Arts, Culture & History for our region as we move forward into 2016.



## Enhancing our communities & organization through collaboration and partnerships

The partnership with the University of Iowa has been an exciting development for us. This effort has made the resources of the University available to us whereby we can bring students and professors to the table for special projects, expertise and research – enabling us to better serve our communities. Some of those projects include collaboration with Keep Iowa Beautiful and efforts in Jasper County such as the Monroe Pedestrian-Bicycle Network Master Plan, Newton 30 Acre Park Development and Prairie City – Mitchellville Rail Trail Development.

In June, IHRC&D also assisted with the special launch of the book, *The Archeological Tour of Iowa* written by State Archeologist William Whittaker, Lynn Alex and Mary De La Garza. We hosted a tour of downtown Des Moines at the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers - site of the historic Fort Des Moines. Over 25 people took part in this tour.

## **Impacting our environment and health to make it better**

Our purpose remains as constant as it was initially through projects designed to improve our environment. This took the form of two key initiatives.

The first project was a collaboration with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 562 traps were installed in twelve Iowa counties to document the infestation of gypsy moths in our wooded areas. This effort continues to be critical to our mission and preservation of our forests remain a high priority for us.

Conservation efforts continue to be vital for us as we also addressed water quality. We participated on the stakeholder group meetings for the Mud, Camp and Spring Creek Watershed Management Authority.

Not only does our environment impact our daily lives, but the health of our citizens is equally important. In conjunction with the University of Iowa, the Iowa Heartland Board of Directors approved participating in a joint grant application to the National Institute of Health. Considerable time was spent in preparing documentation and budgets and obtaining the cooperation of the Des Moines Public School District for this study. If approved by NIH, the study would address hypertension in the Hispanic students attending ten middle schools in the Des Moines schools.

## **IHRC&D Finances**

Iowa Heartland RC&D continues to build its financial base, with significant improvement each year. Progress in stabilizing and building a strong financial base continue to be a critical goal for the board of directors.

Revenue and expenses are pre-audit. The 2015 financial statements and 990 IRS tax return will be available when finalized at [www.ihracd.org](http://www.ihracd.org).

## **Special Thanks**

Countless hours and in-kind services are donated to our organization by those that believe in our mission and work. We simply could not do it without this support and we gratefully thank the following:

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Iowa League of Resource Conservation & Development  
National Park Service  
Shive-Hattery  
University of Iowa  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Warren County

## **IHRC&D Leadership**

Gay Lea Wilson | President  
Representing Polk County  
Pleasant Hill, IA

Keith Sparks | Vice President  
At-Large Member  
Winterset, IA

Nathaniel Tagtow | Secretary/Treasurer  
At-Large Member  
Norwalk, IA

Craig Agan  
Marion County Supervisor  
Knoxville, IA

Denny Carpenter  
Jasper County Supervisor  
Newton, IA

Bob Duff  
Madison County Supervisor  
Winterset, IA

Lori Foresman-Kirpes  
At-Large Member  
Granger, IA

John Schultz  
Representing Soil & Water Conservation District  
Urbandale, IA

Doug Shull  
Warren County Supervisor  
Indianola, IA