

# Conservation and Recreation Efforts

Iowa may not have mountains or oceans, but we do have great state parks and trails, and extensive recreational and cultural activities. It is our task to ensure that we maintain these quality of life assets to assure that Iowans, especially young Iowans, will continue to feel that Iowa is a great place to live, work, and play.

It is the hope of many conservation groups that the 2010 Legislature maintain funding for soil and water conservation, as well as improve Iowa's quality of life through recreational efforts.

As part of the IJOBS program established last year, the Legislature set aside \$100 million for state vertical infrastructure projects. The 2010 Legislature will determine what projects will be funded with this money. One program talked about being included is the State Parks 2020 initiative, which is designed to get our state parks in pristine condition to celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020.

More than 25 million visits are made to Iowa state parks and lakes annually. These recreation sites provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, boating, swimming, wildlife viewing, hiking, riding, picnicking, and just relaxing.

Over that past two years, Iowa's Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program has seen its highest level of funding since 1991 at \$18 million. This program provides moneys for projects that enhance our natural, cultural, and recreational resources including environmental education, soil and water enhancement, parks, trails, museums, and roadside beautification.

Iowa's local watershed improvement grant program has received \$5 million a year since inception in 2005. This \$25 million has provided enhancement of water quality in the state through a variety of impairment-based, locally directed watershed improvement projects.

The Legislature has also funded the following programs in the past, to conserve our agricultural land, with the added benefit of providing additional habitat for our Iowa hunters:

- \$7 million to Iowa's soil conservation cost-share program to help landowners control soil erosion through terraces and other conservation practices.
- \$2.6 million for Iowa's watershed protection program, which provides multi-objective resource protections for flood control, water quality, erosion control, and natural resource conservation.
- \$1.5 million to assist farmers in enrolling in the federal continuous sign-up conservation reserve program and work with them to enhance their revegetation efforts to improve water quality and habitat.
- \$1.5 million for the conservation reserve enhancement program to restore and construct wetlands for the purposes of intercepting tile line runoff, reducing nutrient loss, improving water quality, and enhancing ag production practices.