

The May 2021 issue of *The Iowa County magazine* features Iowa's County Conservation System including brief descriptions of individual, innovative county projects. This document contains more information about each project, including funding sources. Find the magazine at www.iowacounties.org.

EXPLORE

IOWA COUNTY CONSERVATION

Pages 3-6 Buchanan County IRON BRIDGE ACCESS

Dan Cohen, Executive Director

Project included: Universal Launch; Paved Trail; Parking Area; Restroom; and Lighting RESULT - A gateway to river use for people of various physical and boating abilities.

Pages 7-12 Jasper County ASHTON OBSERVATORY CHILDREN'S MURAL

Keri Van Zante, Director

Thirty foot by nine foot painted mural that accurately depicts the glow in the dark southern summer night sky settling over a prairie.

Pages 13-16 Kossuth County COZY GROVE SUGAR SHACK RENOVATION

Kendall Stumme, Director

Replacement of the original "Cozy Grove" sugar shack continues the unique maple syrup operation with a history of over 70 years.

Pages 17-19 Linn County WAPSI BLUFF SHELTER

Ryan Schlader, Community Outreach Specialist

The open air shelter and deck offer a breathtaking view of the Wapsipinicon river that will be used as a regional attraction for many years to come.

Pages 20-22 Loess Hills Missouri River Region CABIN INITIATIVE

Scott Nelson, Director, Harrison County Conservation Board

Harrison, Mills, and Pottawattamie Counties worked together in a regional partnership to build cabins. Harrison County's cabins are located within the Willow Lake Recreation Area.

Pages 23-24 Marshall County LEONARD GRIMES MEMORIAL AMPHITHEATER

Michael J. Stegman, Director

The amphitheater accompanies the Grimes Farm and Conservation Center and is used for educational programming, live concerts, and private events.

Pages 25-26
Palo Alto County
BURNS PRAIRIE

Mary Barrick, Director

Beautiful 160-acre wildlife area of prairie, wetlands, and a food plot. Restoration project completed at four wetlands to improve water quality and benefit wildlife.

Pages 27-30
Poweshiek County
DIAMOND LAKE

Mark Vavroch, Director

New 33-site campground, trails, and a shower house allowed for holiday weekend crowds every weekend during the summer of 2020.

Pages 31-61
Ringgold County
LIBERTY LAKE

Kate Zimmerman, Director

The park will offer fishing, kayaking, canoeing, camping, disc golf, and more with the 12.5 acre lake as the park's focal point.

Pages 62-64
Sac County
GRANT PARK SPOOKTACULAR

Kristen Bieret, Naturalist

Provided a drive-through, over-the-top community event for Halloween 2020. This project was low cost and had a huge impact during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pages 65-67
Scott County
ALGAE WHEEL WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

Roger A. Kean, Executive Director

Replacement of existing wastewater treatment plant with the "First in Iowa AlgaeWheel" that became fully operational in January of 2020. This option was more sustainable and could potentially improve water quality in the discharging stream.

Page 68
Story County
TEDESCO ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CORRIDOR

Erica Place, Outreach Coordinator

Unique, 37-acre community space in the ISU Research Park that showcases conservation techniques, sustainable technologies, environmental education, water quality awareness, and trail connectivity.

Pages 69-71
Wapello County
PEARSON BUTTERFLY PARK

Rick Tebbs, Director
Paige Shafer, Educational Specialist
Faith Henrichs, Naturalist

Three-phase plan to create a one-of-a-kind butterfly park with an emphasis on the importance of pollinators and pollinator habitat in Iowa. This will be a hands on learning experience of the diverse Iowa ecosystem and what people can do to implement habitat on their property.

Pages 72-74
Woodbury County
BROWNS LAKE SHORELINE

Dan Heissel, Executive Director

A shoreline enhancement and development of 1,300 feet of shoreline allows for use by park users and anglers includes the construction of a handicap fishing pier.

**Click on any description to jump to the full project information and photos. Click on any page in the document to jump back to the contents pages.*

ESCAPE

County: Buchanan

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Position: Executive Director

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Name of Project or Event: Iron Bridge Access – Gateway to the Wapsipinicon River

Project Budget: \$390,000

List Project Partners:

- Buchanan County Conservation Board, Board of Supervisors, and Secondary Roads Department
- Iowa DNR Rivers Program (Water Trails); Planning and guidance
- Water Recreation Access Cost-share Program (\$266,145)
- Wellmark Foundation (\$73,715)
- Black Hawk Gaming Association (\$34,715)
- Buchanan County Community Foundation (\$10,000)
- Local donations made up the remaining cost.

Project Description (*In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project*): _____

It takes a lot of partners to make big things happen...

Demand for river access has increased dramatically during the past 20 years with the explosion in popularity of kayaking and other types of paddling. The diversity of users also increased, now including more families and people of all ages, physical needs, and boating abilities. It became clear that an old ramp, parking area, and absence of a restroom did not meet demand for safe and enjoyable water access. The Conservation Board responded with plans for a substantial project that included:

- An improved concrete boat ramp and “**universal launch**” to better allow for loading and unloading motorboats and paddle craft. The system includes a second ramp and pedestrian sidewalk, and the ability for people to easily transport themselves and their gear between ramps and sidewalks.
- A **paved trail** extending under a busy county gravel road to provide access to and from additional parking areas at an adjacent wildlife area. The trail also connects to a couple miles of maintained woodland paths.
- A reconfigured and enlarged **parking area** with painted parking lanes to alleviate parking “free-for-alls” and two spots for handicap parking.

- A **restroom** - for the obvious.
- Overhead **lighting** (solar).

The result is a gateway to river use for people of various physical and boating abilities, located in one of the most significant stretches of river corridor in the state – a stretch of water featuring the river’s most scenic forested bluffs, abundant wildlife, and quality fishing. The river is part of the region’s history. The old Taylor’s Ford bridge adjacent to the access is on the National Register of Historic Places (a future project to restore the old structure is in the works!). Downstream, boaters float past the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Walter Home and Boat House at Cedar Rock State Park.

The project thrived with support from Buchanan County Board of Supervisors, County Engineer, and Secondary Roads staff. The assistant county engineer provided engineering services. Recognizing the danger of unsafe overflow parking on the county road, the Board of Supervisors and Secondary Roads Department developed additional parking along the east side of road. The paved trail extending under Nolen Ave. provides safe access between the river access, parking areas, and Guy Grover Timber and Tree Plantings.







County: Jasper

Contact Person: Keri Van Zante

Position: Director

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Name of Project or Event: Ashton Observatory Childrens Mural

Project Budget: \$5,400

List Project Partners: Jasper County Conservation, Jasper Conservation
Connection, Keep Iowa Beautiful, ^(Paint Iowa Beautiful) Des Moines Astronomical
Society, Lauren Roush, Pauli Zmolek, Jasper County Students

Project Description (In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project):

see attached pdf plus photos

In the spring of 2019, Jasper County Conservation (JCC) partnered with the Des Moines Astronomical Society (DMAS), Paint Iowa Beautiful, and 2 local artists, Lauren Roush and Pauli Zmolek, to create a 270 ft² mural (30'x9'), painted by local youth, on the north outside wall of the observatory at Ashton Wildwood Park. The mural accurately depicts the glow in the dark southern summer night sky settling over a prairie scene. DMAS provided guidance and expertise for which components of the night sky should be involved, including the moon, Milky Way, and the constellations Sagittarius and Scorpio. Lauren Roush is a Newton Native and now elementary art teacher for the Newton Community School District. Lauren has experience with murals, as she was invited to create one in Chisinau, Moldova (Eastern Europe) depicting two hands holding roses as a symbol of cooperation between Moldova and the United States. Lauren was excited to propose this project to her art students and enrolled 2-4th graders to help create and paint the mural! Pauli Zmolek is a painter and muralist with a long history of impressive works. Among her many accomplishments, Pauli was the first woman to ever serve as a decorative painter for the Architect of the United States Capitol. She was responsible for designing the decorative panels that adorn the Senate Chambers and completed restoration work for the decorative artwork in the Library of Congress. JCC was privileged to have such gifted local artists involved with this special project!









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Position:
_____Director_____

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Name of Project or Event: _____Maple Syrup program/Sugar Shack renovation_____

Project Budget: _____\$34,000-Shack construction expense_____

List Project Partners: _____Private Donations, Water's Edge Nature Center Foundation and the Kossuth County Conservation Board_____

Project Description (In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project):

Kossuth County has a unique maple syrup operation that has been around for over 70 years. The maple syrup operation in the Smith Woods began in the late 1940's by Slim Smith, the owner of the property and several of his friends. The original "Cozy Grove" sugar shack was constructed in 1949 and first used for maple syrup in 1950. The Conservation Board's involvement began by taking local students on field trips to the site in 1987. When the Smith Woods property came up for sale in 1995, it was purchased by the KCCB. This allowed the KCCB staff to continue this unique operation and open the area for the public to enjoy and participate in the process. Each spring when weather conditions are favorable, nearly 500 school children as well as the general public tour the "Cozy Grove" sugar shack and experience the process of turning raw sap into maple syrup.

In the fall of 2020 a new era of the "Cozy Grove" sugar shack began. The original shack, which had been used from 1950-2020, had deteriorated beyond repair. A new shack was constructed in the same location with the same design and dimensions as the original. The Smith Wildlife Area is located two miles south of Algona and is open year round to the public.







County: Linn
Contact Person: Ryan Schlader

Position: Community Outreach Specialist, Linn County Conservation

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Name of Project or Event: Wapsi Bluff Shelter

Project Budget: \$1.7 Million

List Project Partners: Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs: Iowa Great Places program

Project Description (*In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project*): _____

An open air shelter and deck offers a breathtaking view of the Wapsipinicon River just beyond the entrance of the 966 acre Pinicon Ridge Park near Central City. Along with 45 tables to seat 250 people, the facility includes new restrooms, serving counter, large grills with a catering area, and bioswales to control stormwater runoff. Future development at this site will include a playground and a recreation trail connection to the park and Central City. This redevelopment is taking place in an area that use to include a former park shop and service yard. Now the site will be used as a regional attraction for many years to come.

The addition of Wapsi Bluff Shelter furthers Linn County Conservation's commitment to expose and engage the community and visitors to experience the natural treasures available in our Linn County parks. The new venue opened in May of 2021 and is available for rental online at LinnCountyParks.com.

Additional information: Project was funded in part by a \$400,000 Iowa Great Places Grant through the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.





County: ___Harrison, Pottawattamie, and Mills – Loess Hills Missouri River Region

Contact Person: Scott Nelson

Position: _Director

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Name of Project or Event: LMRR Cabin Initiative

Project Budget: _Harrison County project: \$425,000

List Project Partners: _Harrison County Board of Supervisors, Harrison CCB, Iowa West Foundation, Dean J King Family Foundation.

Project Description (*In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project*):

Harrison, Pottawattamie, and Mills CCB's worked together in a region partnership called the Loess Hills Missouri River Region (LHMMR), as a part of the Parks to People program, to build cabins within each prospective program. Jointly, an Iowa West Foundation grant was awarded to each CCB for \$116,666. Harrison was awarded a \$75,000 grant from the Dean J King Family Foundation. A construction loan from the HC Board of Supervisors was secured for a total of \$425,000 which was bought down with grants and the sale of 2 original camping cabins. The residual loan will be paid back via revenues off of the 3 cabins, and is projected to be clear in less than 3 years.

Harrison CCB's cabins are located at the Willow Lake Recreation Area. Modular homes were identified as being the best alternative concerning construction, with lease of maintenance and quick construction being the leading factor.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, it became of the utmost clarity that families were looking for opportunities to find a piece of "normal". These rentable cabins proved that the public was/is looking for outdoor recreational activities.

Additional information: _Two of the Willow Lake cabins sleep 4 and are ADA compliant. Each also has a bedroom, kitchen, full bathroom, deck, and access to the rest of the park. The third cabin sleeps 14 and has a full basement! It also is ADA compliant with full kitchen, full bathroom upstairs, and a half-bath downstairs. All cabins are reserved via the MyCountyParks.com website up to two years in advance.





Marshall County Conservations Leonard Grimes Memorial Amphitheater was first made available for public use in 2018 with no tax dollars used for construction. Like most MCCB special projects all funds were accounted for through competitive grants and private donations. The amphitheater accompanies the Grimes Farm and Conservation Center which lies on the western outskirts of Marshalltown in Marshall County. Uses include a platform for the MCCB's Environmental Education programming, a series of live and local concerts during summer months sponsored by the Friends of Marshall County Conservation and private events like weddings. A rental schedule is available by calling 64-752-5490.

Project budget, \$172,000.00

Donora to the project:

Leonard Grimes memorial donations

Noon Kiwanis

Marshalltown Convention and Visitors Bureau

Marshalltown Development Foundation

Martha Ellen Tye Foundation

ANN C Keyser charitable Trust

Noon Optimists

Morning Optimists

Grimes Farm Run





County: Palo Alto

Contact Person: Mary Barrick

Position: Director

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Name of Project or Event: Burns Prairie

Project Budget: —

List Project Partners: U.S. Fish + Wildlife Services, Palo Alto
County Board of Supervisors

Project Description (In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project):

attached

Picture attached. - Burns Prairie

Burns Prairie

Burns Prairie is a beautiful 160-acre wildlife area consisting of prairie, wetlands, and a food plot. This wildlife area provides breeding, nesting, and feeding habitat for a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, and offers a stopover location for migratory birds. Furbearers and other wildlife also benefit. Burns Prairie has five wetlands that perform as reservoirs for rainwater, acting as a natural buffer, or sponge, absorbing water slowly and allowing the water to permeate into the ground. With the ability to store water and release it gradually, this reduces the intensity of floods, prevents erosion, recharges local groundwater supplies, and filters the water by trapping nutrient and sediment pollution in a wetland.

Last year, a wetland restoration was completed with the guidance and help from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The restoration project consisted of excavation work at four wetlands, which involved replacing and upgrading the existing water control structures, creating several armored spillways, installing wire mesh on existing dikes, and reseeding the disturbed areas. Restoring these wetlands will improve water quality and benefit wildlife.

Burns Prairie is part of a bigger picture with neighboring areas like Glacial Ridge, Hauschen Wildlife Area, Telford Prairie, and Watson Heritage Area. These areas create a wildlife corridor by providing habitat diversity and important resting grounds for migratory birds. This corridor is home to many plant and animal species that are on the Iowa's threatened or endangered list.

Aside from all the benefits of a wetland, these areas offer recreational opportunities such as bird watching, hunting, hiking, and provides an aesthetic value.



County: Poweshiek

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Position: Director

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Name of Project or Event: Diamond Lake Campground and Stagecoach Trail

Project Budget: \$800K

List Project Partners: Poweshiek County Conservation Board, Poweshiek County Board of Supervisors, Brownells Family Trust, City of Montezuma, Grants – LWCF (land), REAP (trail), DOT Enhancement (Trail) A large portion of the campground project was funded by camping receipts (Trust Account) and the County Conservation REAP Account.

Project Description *(In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project):*

The large number of visitors enjoying county parks and wildlife areas last year during the COVID-19 pandemic were truly surprising to most of us. Once the parks were allowed to open (May 8, for campers), the campers, fishermen, walkers, and other outdoor enthusiasts came to Diamond Lake to enjoy the many outdoor amenities the park had to offer. It was like a holiday weekend of campers every weekend! Camping at Diamond Lake increased by over 25% from the previous calendar year with those camping fees going directly back into park improvements or developments.

The Conservation Board's future vision of a new campground/trail some 10 years ago helped relieve some of the pandemic pressure from last year's visitors. Without the new campground and trail, local campers and hikers would have had to travel further at a time when we all wanted to stay close to home. The new 33 site campground at Diamond Lake joined 50 existing electrical sites. A new hard surface trail provided a direct link from the City of Montezuma to Diamond Lake. Both developments were a welcome sight to all Poweshiek County residents wanting to get outdoors and social distance. The Board finished construction (2018) of a new shower house in that new campground helping relieve some of last year's pressure on facilities. Many campers discovered Diamond Lake Park for the first-time last year, and truly enjoyed it. For most visitors, the question isn't if they'll be back in 2021, but when! So, will this year be another holiday weekend - every weekend kind of year??

Additional information: Photos – Overlook photo: The new 33-site campground at Diamond Lake provided additional camping sites that were desperately needed last year during the pandemic.

New Shower house photo: When visitors overwhelmed the park last year, this shower house located in the new campground at Diamond Lake provided additional facilities for campers. Stagecoach Trail Photo: Stagecoach Trail provides a direct link from the City of Montezuma to Diamond Lake Park. Campground ribbon cutting photo: Project Partners were critical for the Diamond Lake campground project. Representative Dave Maxwell (3rd from the left) joined the celebration voicing his support for the REAP Program.







County: Ringgold

Contact Person: Kate Zimmerman

Position: Executive Director

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Name of Project or Event: Liberty Lake Development Project

Project Budget: \$1,834,680.00 – Pre-COVID cost estimates. If prices continue to go up - we will have to increase the overall budget for our construction due to increased costs of lumber and other materials.

List Project Partners:

In developing the proposal for Liberty Lake, Ringgold County Conservation reached out to multiple local groups and organizations, community members and the general public. These meetings helped to cultivate what the community deemed a priority and what they felt was currently lacking from their local areas. From there, the Ringgold County Conservation Board and Executive Director Kate Zimmerman drafted a vision plan for the area to include these amenities as appropriate.

Below is a list of key funding and local support partners:

Ringgold Conservation Foundation, Ringgold Chapter Pheasants Forever, Mount Ayr Community High School, Ringgold Outdoor Alliance, Ringgold County Tourism, City of Mount Ayr, Mount Ayr Lion's Club, Ringgold County H.E.L.P. Youth Pod, REAP, South Central Community Foundation, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Fish Habitat Stamp Grant, 5-2-1-0 Healthy Hometown, Ringgold Wellness Coalition, SWI REC, Larry and Rita Hunter, The Jerome Family, Jim Norris, Munyon Plumbing and Heating, Starlin Construction, Water Recreation Access Grant and many local businesses and private donors.

Project Description (In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project):

Ringgold County Conservation is excited to develop Liberty Lake into a must visit destination for Southwest Iowa. With limited improvements over the past 70 years, this area is ready for a blast of growth and expansion. The area had been maintained by the City of Mount Ayr as a low impact recreational area since the 1940's after the construction of a new lake for a water source for the town of Mount Ayr. In the fall of 2018, Liberty Lake was donated to the Ringgold County Conservation Board. The 12.5 acre lake is the focal point of the park and will be able to offer multiple recreational opportunities such as fishing, kayaking, canoeing and more! The history of this area is fascinating and has served the people of Ringgold County in multiple facets for the past 100 years! We hope to continue the legacy of the area by creating a more user friendly area with improved access and increased amenities.

The vision plan is set up into stages to accommodate multiple large scale projects with a small budget that relies heavily on grant funding and donations. This sets the tone for the overall development of the area by creating smaller goals within the larger overall development goals. Each stage identifies the unique objectives that will be accomplished. As we progress through each stage of the vision plan, Ringgold County Conservation will be able to check off the completed goals & objectives that were successful and identify those aspects of the project to the community.

The Liberty Lake project is a perfect example of growing the state of Iowa's economy through travel expenditures. Attracting visitors to the communities of Ringgold County and Southwest Iowa will improve the tourism in a more rural part of the state. Tourism is a high priority for Ringgold County. The Conservation Board works hard to continue to bring new and exciting opportunities that will benefit the local businesses as well as highlight the natural resources and outdoor recreational opportunities that will entice visitors to come back for more. Southwest Iowa boasts one of the most diverse environments with an abundance of habitat and wildlife for nature enthusiasts of all ages, including the only place in Iowa to see the Greater Prairie Chicken.

Additional information:

As one of the smallest counties in the state of Iowa, Ringgold County Conservation works with one of the lowest budgets in the state and has the lowest number of employees (1 full-time staff member) in the state. Still, their drive to provide environmental education and outdoor recreation opportunities to the public shows their dedication to the community and involves them donating countless hours of their personal time and money to this organization to ensure the continued success of the conservation department.









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LIBERTY LAKE MASTER PLAN

RINGGOLD COUNTY, IOWA

JULY, 2019



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Purpose

The master plan for Liberty Lake provides a framework for future project planning, development, and implementation. A comprehensive master plan also establishes the best suitability for the programmatic and physical elements on site. The Liberty Lake master plan serves as a general guide for appropriate spatial organization of site elements. The master plan also provides a long-range vision for this development as entire projects or partial projects are able to be implemented. The master plan breaks down into five individual projects that will be used in fund-raising for later construction of these projects.

Project Goals

- Develop Liberty Lake to become an asset for the communities of Ringgold County.
- Rebrand the lake to become more of an interest for visitors.
- Install and repair utilities and infrastructure for the use of visitors.
- Increase the capability for recreational activity.

Objectives

- Development entry and educational signage.
- Create event and lodging spaces for visitors to rent out.
- Add public amenities.
- Install walking trails along the lake.
- Create a disc golf course.

History

Ringgold County Conservation acquired a new property currently known as the “Old Lake” from the City of Mount Ayr on September 1st, 2018. Liberty Lake (formerly the Old Mount Ayr Reservoir) is a 12 acre lake located within a 40 acre park recently acquired by the Ringgold County Conservation Board from the City of Mount Ayr.

It is now owned and managed by the Ringgold County Conservation Board, located on the north edge of Mount Ayr, Iowa along state Highway 169. The 12.4 acre lake is the focal point of Liberty Lake and has been a part of the landscape since 1914 when it was constructed for a source of water for the town of Mount Ayr and became known as the Mount Ayr Reservoir. In 1939 a new water source was developed, leaving the Mount Ayr Reservoir as a secondary location, eventually becoming defunct and used only as a recreational area. Since that time, little has been done with Liberty Lake, leaving much maintenance and upgrade work to be completed when the Conservation Board took possession September 1st, 2018.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

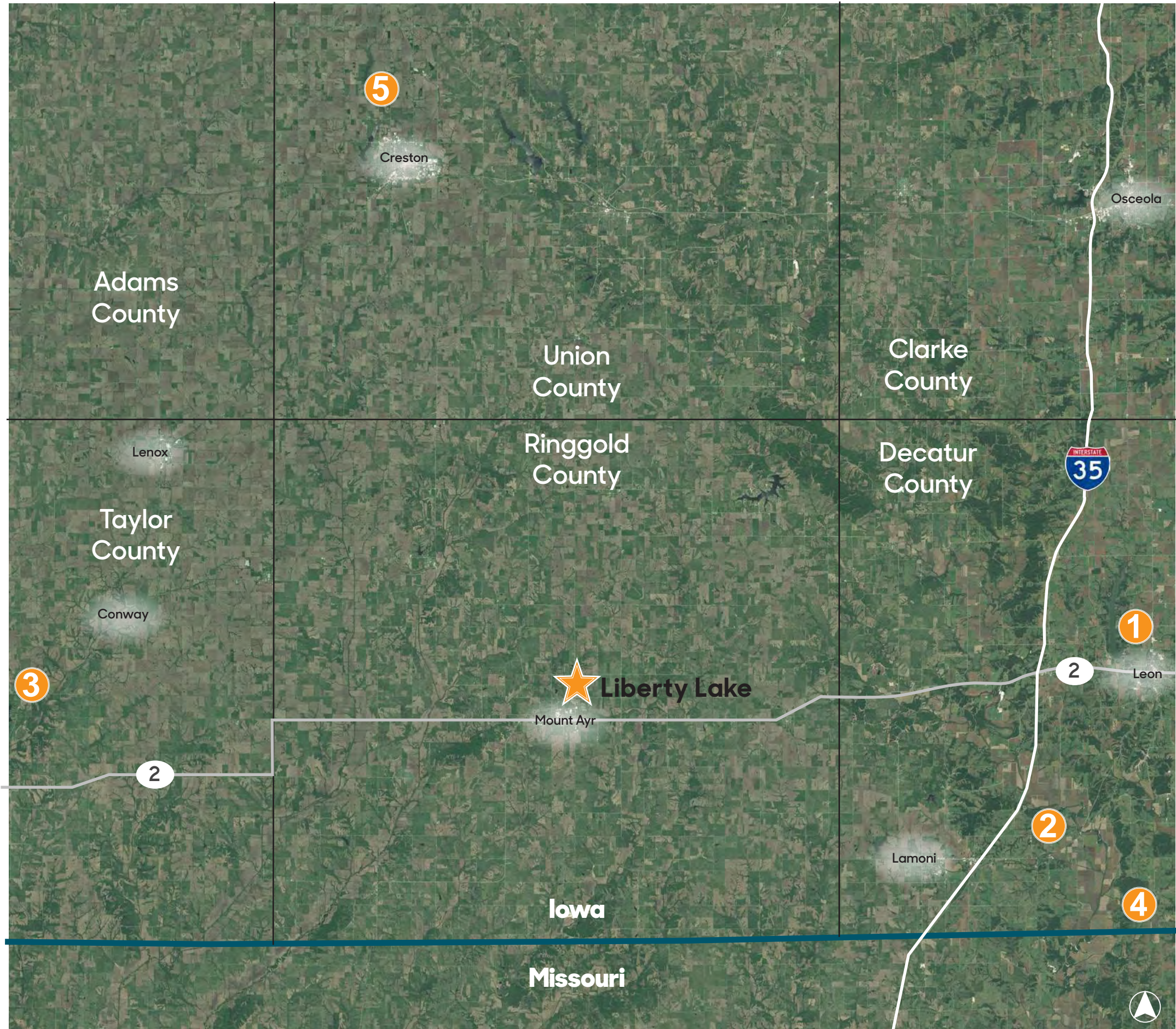
Master Plan Study Area

Liberty Lake is on the outskirts of the Mount Ayr city boundary. Adjacent Iowa counties have campground sites that are important to look at as precedents to gain knowledge in the elements of a successful county park.

The regional context of Southern Iowa is important to note when planning to add amenities for the communities of Ringgold County. Nearby campsites who provide similar amenities and services should be thought about when planning an estimated user volume.

Regional Campsites

- 1 Little River Recreation Area.....29 miles East
- 2 Slip Bluff County Park.....30 miles East
- 3 Lake of Three Fires State Park.....31 miles West
- 4 Nine Eagles State Park.....35.5 miles East
- 5 Green Valley State Park.....37 miles North



Regional context map showing comparable campgrounds.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Inventory and Analysis Legend

- Legend
- Primary Road
 - Native/Low Maintenance Area
 - General Parking Area
 - Relatively Flat Area
 - Existing Tree
 - Surface Water Flow
 - Structure
 - Viewshed
 - Dock
 - Sign/Site Element
 - Culvert
 - Municipal Boundary
 - Bridge
 - Overhead Power Lines (Pole)

Summary of Findings

The majority of land use is water of Liberty Lake and mowed lawn. Native grasses are narrowly found on the steepest locations of surface water flow and the Southern edge of Liberty Lake where there is no circulation options.

The slopes on the Western and Eastern edges of the site offer great panoramic views of the lake and rolling hills. There are few areas of flat surfaces.

Surface water flow from the Eastern side of Highway 169 comes onto the site through culverts at two points.



Aerial images showing areas of intended future development.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing Landscape

The rolling hills, canopy cover, and blue lake are the features people will come to visit. The ability to enjoy this landscape is the first priority of the Liberty Lake improvements. There are some concerns with the ecology as it relates to the health of the water, water’s edge, and wooded areas. Biological diversity is minimal which impacts the resiliency to unusual weather or invasive species.

Improvements to the landscape can also improve the visual appeal for visitors. The landscape eludes to panoramic views of the lake, and the current condition doesn’t capitalize on these natural features.

Existing Site Features

The existing site features are few in numbers but have great potential to offer visitors a great park experience. Repairs and maintenance will be needed on infrastructure elements such as the bridge. Asthetic improvements will help with Liberty Lake’s branding and representation to the communities of Ringgold County.

Existing Concerns

With the project goals in mind, there are existing conditions that will hinder the experience of visitors and maintenance staff of Liberty Lake.

Steep slopes and poor drainage can cause erosion and water management issues if they aren’t addressed. There is evidence the wear of erosion is having an impact on the gravel road.

The lack of definition of the Western edge of the site will leave overnight visitors exposed to the elements.



View looking South at the West side of the lake.



View looking West toward Liberty Lake.



View looking East from the NW corner of the property boundary.



The only existing shelter on site.



North side entry signage.



Bridge over dam.



Severe erosion on the gravel road. Looking North.



Stumps litter the slope West of Liberty Lake.



The edge between the agricultural field and the West side of the site feels unprotected. View looking South.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvements and Developments

The resulting Liberty Lake master plan was derived from the comprehensive planning process and guided recommendations from Ringgold County Conservation. The master plan responds directly to the needs identified throughout the planning process and shape how the future development will continue. The overview plan on this page highlights the major design and program features. Subsequent pages will take you through a series of more detailed plans showing all of the proposed improvements.

Recreation and lodging improvements will make Liberty Lake a visitor destination of currently underutilized natural resource. With a variety of ways to enjoy the space, these improvements offer a county park experience for more people to enjoy.



Liberty Lake Master Plan.



Bird's eye view looking North West over the Lodge.



View looking West at the Event Space.

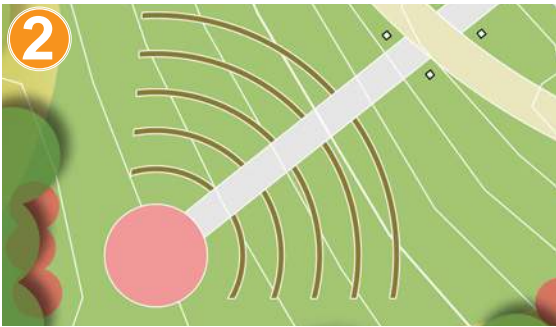


Bird's eye view looking East over family cabin.

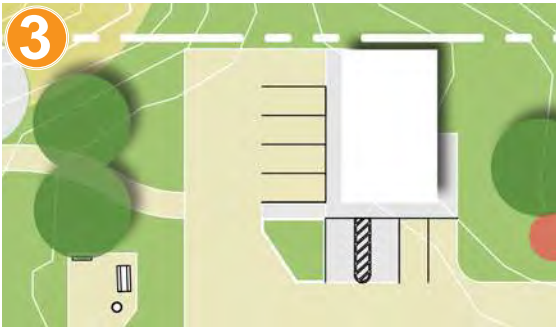
PROPOSED FEATURES



Event Lodge



Event Amphitheater



Restroom/Storage Facility



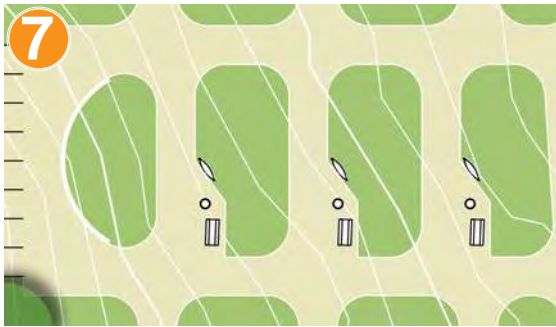
Council Ring



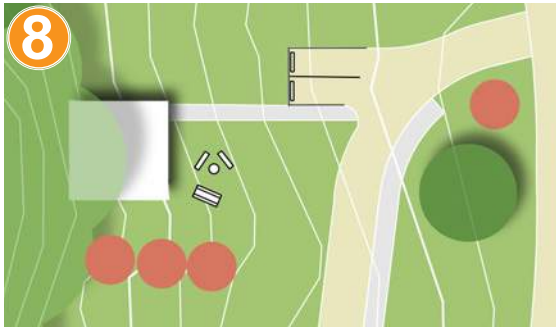
Disc Golf Course



Primitive Camp Site



R.V. Site



Primitive Cabin



Full Utility Cabin



Family Cabin



Recreation and lodging improvements will make Liberty Lake a visitor destination for a currently underutilized natural resource. With a variety of ways to enjoy the space, these improvements offer a county park experience for more people to enjoy.

EVENT LODGE



1) Proposed lodge footprint and floorplan with attached deck and gravel parking.

The Event Lodge is planned to be the largest structure on site, designed for large group events to rent. The space offers a improvements to the gravel parking lot, offering wider parking spots, a dumpster enclosure, and adding shade trees. Space will be left for overflow parking on the East side of the site closest to Highway 169. Four paved ADA accessible parking spots will be located closest to the entrance of the Event Lodge.

An attached deck would offer views to the Liberty Lake as well as the proposed Event Amphitheater. This site is shown surrounded by native grasses and ornamental plantings to show off the natural resources during events.

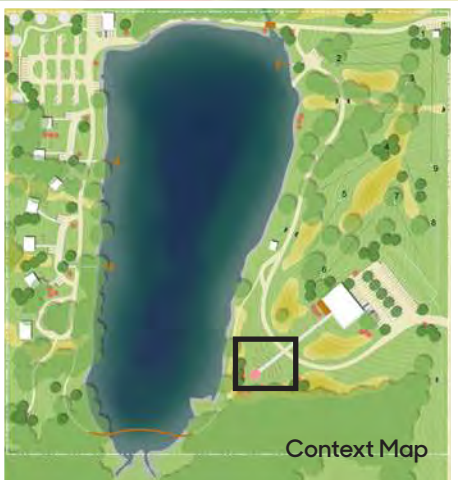


View looking North West showing the lodge and it relationship to Liberty Lake.

EVENT AMPHITHEATER



2) Highlighting the relationship to the gravel road, planting beds and the Event Amphitheater.



The Event Amphitheater is accessed through a concrete sidewalk leading from the Event Lodge to the amphitheater stage. The stage would be an ideal outdoor location for wedding processions, outdoor and large gatherings surrounded by radial stone bench seating into the slope of the hill.

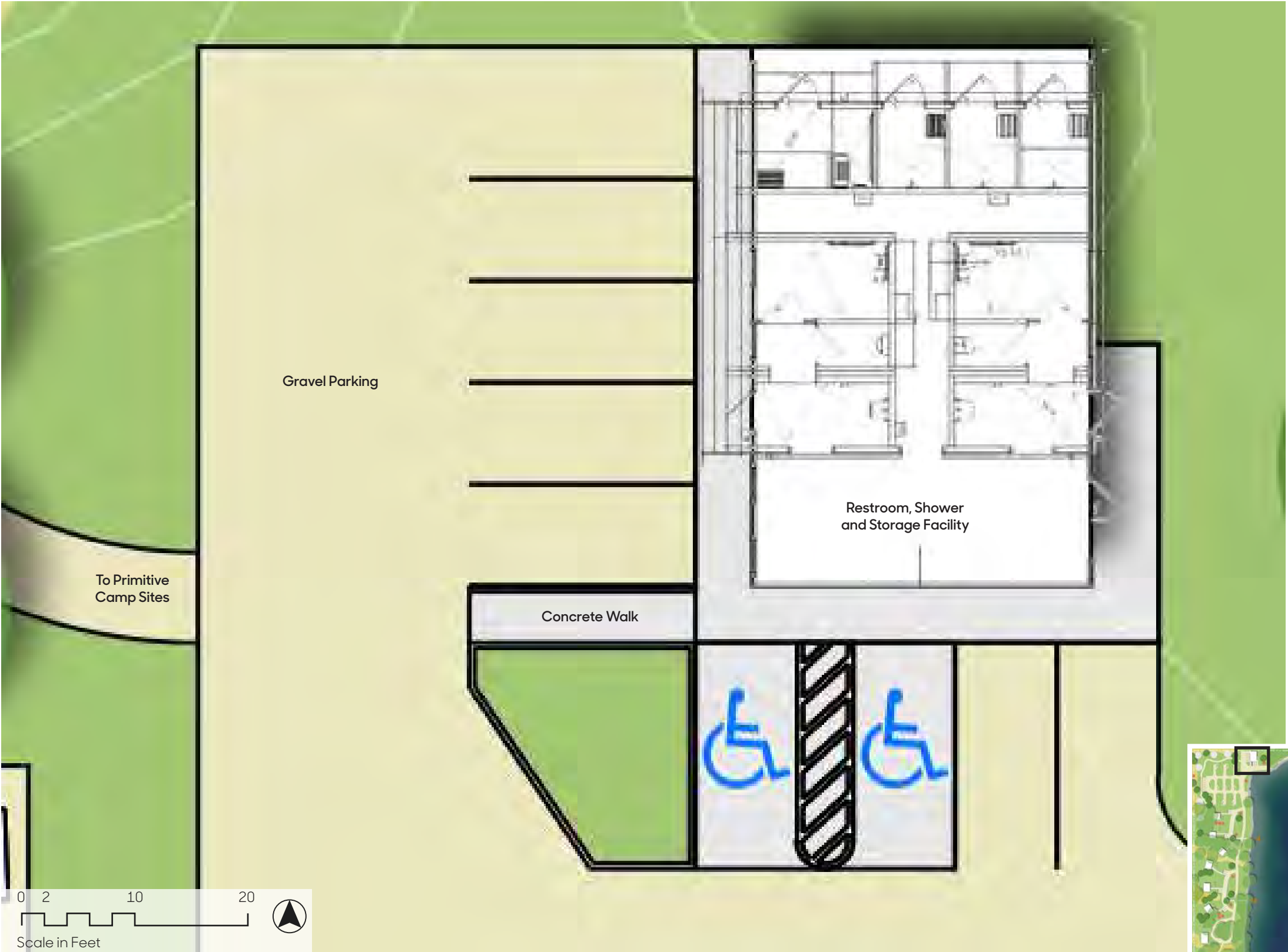
Bollards are shown here as a visual identifying feature for drivers on the gravel road to look for pedestrians crossing along the sidewalk.

Ornamental planting beds, native grass swaths, and Liberty Lake make up the background views of the stage.



View looking West showing an event at the amphitheater.

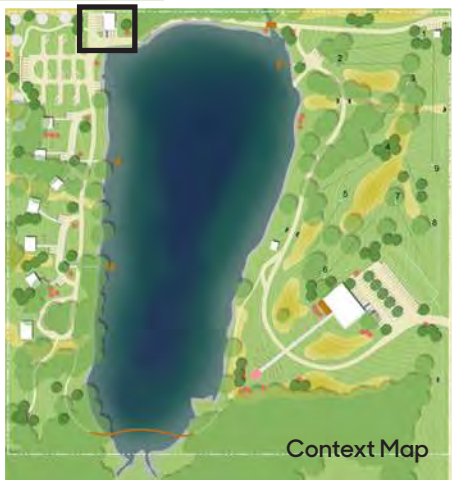
RESTROOM SHOWER AND STORAGE FACILITY



The restroom will provide separate mens and womens restroom entrances with electricity and showers.

A restroom, shower and storage facility needs to be close to the primitive and RV lodging areas of Liberty Lake. This graphic shows how the pedestrian walkway from the Primitive Camp Sites can get to the facility.

The facility will provide gravel parking as well as two paved ADA accessible parking spots.



3) Footprint and floorplan of the Restroom/Storage Facility.

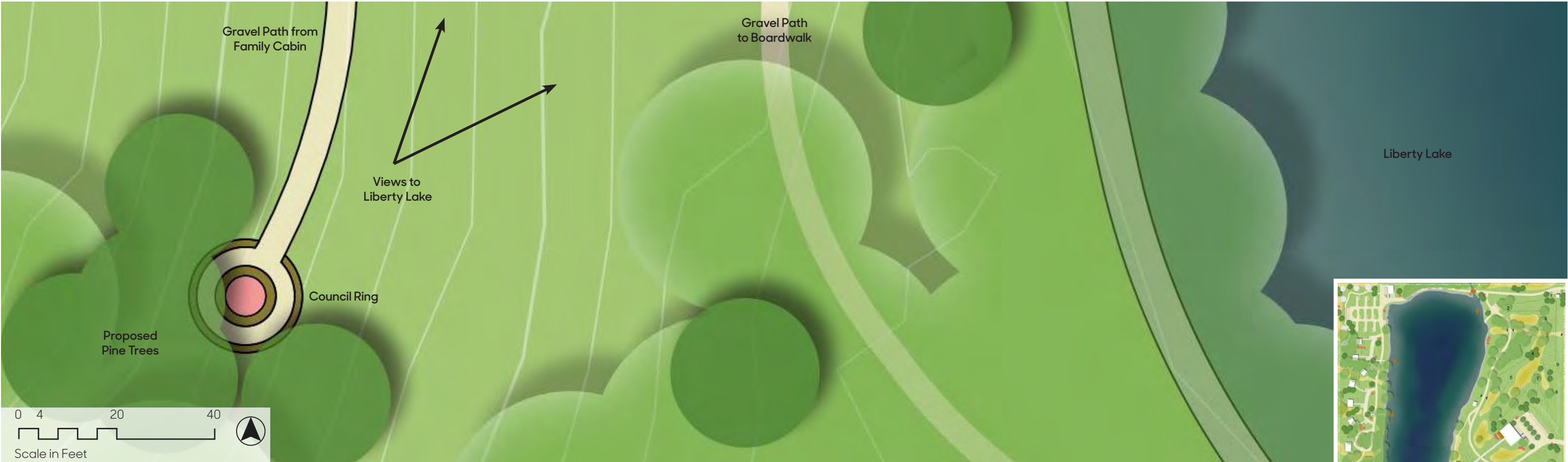
COUNCIL RING



View looking East from the fire ring to Liberty Lake.

The Family Lodge will offer a Council ring to accompany a private and scenic location that can accommodate large groups. A gravel path will wind through trees to the fire ring from the Family Lodge.

Pine trees around the West side of the fire ring will keep it protected from the edge of the site and offer as a nature wayfinding element to guide families there.



4) Council ring surrounded by pine trees.

View looking North showing the gravel trail and fire ring in relation to the Family Cabin.



DISC GOLF COURSE



5) Nine hole disc golf course plan.



Perspective looking West showing disc golf holes and tee pads nestled along prairie swatches.

Disc golf, or frisbee golf, is becoming a common amenity in Iowa communities, urban or rural. Disc golf provides light cardiovascular exercise in the great outdoors. The game plays similarly to golf. Putters, mid-range, and driver discs provide variability in throwing distances. The goal is to get your disc in the basket in as few throws as possible. Official disc golf rules can be found at the following website <https://www.pdga.com/rules>.

Disc golf is free to play and only requires inexpensive equipment. Required infrastructure includes concrete pads, signage, and baskets which can be installed in areas typically deemed unusable for development. Areas with steep slopes and flood plains only add to the experience of disc golf.

Liberty Lake has the capability to provide a 9-hole disc golf course to fully utilize on the site's grade change and panoramic views. The plan on this page provides a design showing effective planting locations to define the edges, beginning and end of holes.

PLANT MATERIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Overstory Trees

The current placement and selection of overstory tree species work against the intended functionality of a county park space. Large shade trees create physical and visual boundaries to define open spaces and viewsheds. Informative placement of overstory trees can transform an outdoor space into a purposeful dynamic space.

Existing tree species include maple, pine, and oak. While many of these trees are thriving in their environment, the lack of biological diversity inhibits resiliency to extreme weather and invasive insects.

The recommended species provided on this page where chosen with the varying conditions of the site in mind to find a place for the plants to thrive.

Ornamental Trees

Ornamental trees can offer seasonal interest with exfoliating bark in the winter, bright leaf color in the fall, and fragrant flowers in the spring. Ornamental trees are typically smaller in scale than overstory trees, often giving the spaces they are located a more “intimate” feel.



Baldcypress can tolerate all soil saturation conditions that exist on site.

Common Baldcypress *Taxodium distichum*

Height: 50 to 70 ft.
Light: Full Sun
Bloom Time: Non-flowering
Fall Color: Reddish Brown
Soil: Wet/Dry
Origin: Central to Eastern US
Zone: 4 to 9



White Oaks tolerate many conditions such as the dry steep slopes found on site.

White Oak *Quercus alba*

Height: 50 to 80 ft.
Light: Full Sun
Bloom Time: May
Fall Color: Red
Soil: Moist/Dry
Origin: Central to Eastern US
Zone: 3 to 9



European Beech will thrive in a large open areas and offer winter interest with its appealing bark.

European Beech *Fagus sylvatica*

Height: 50 to 60 ft.
Light: Full Sun/Part Shade
Bloom Time: April to May
Fall Color: Golden Brown
Soil: Moist/Drained
Origin: Europe
Zone: 4 to 7



American Sycamore will provide large amounts of shade in areas with moist soil types.

American Sycamore *Platanus occidentalis*

Height: 75 to 100 ft.
Light: Full Sun
Bloom Time: April
Fall Color: Yellow
Soil: Wet/Dry
Origin: Central to Eastern US
Zone: 4 to 9



Flowering Crabapple are a hardy native ornamental that attract birds with their fruit.

Flowering Crabapple *Malus 'Prairifire'*

Height: 20 to 30 ft.
Light: Full Sun/Part Shade
Bloom Time: April
Fall Color:
Soil: Moist/Dry
Origin: Central to Eastern US
Zone: 4 to 9



Serviceberry are one of the first trees to bloom in the spring and offer edible berries all summer.

Shadblow Serviceberry *Amelanchier canadensis*

Height: 6–20 ft.
Light: Full Sun/Part Shade
Bloom Time: April to May
Fall Color: Orange/Red
Soil: Wet/Dry
Origin: Eastern US
Zone: 3 to 8

LODGING FACILITIES



Primitive Camping Site (6)

These sites will not offer electricity or water. Camp sites are connected along a gravel path leading to the restroom facility and parking.

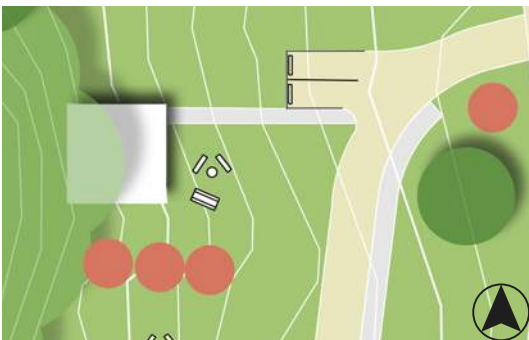
Camp sites offer a fire ring with a grill rack, picnic table, and concrete pad for the tent.



R.V Site (9)

These stalls offer electricity and water hookups. There are six back in parking stalls and three pull through stalls.

The amenities in the drawing show a fire ring with a grill rack, picnic table, wheel stop and hammock poles



Primitive Cabin (3)

Three primitive cabins offer no utilities. The are the closest cabins to the restroom/shower facility. The cabins are along their own gravel drive with two stalls for parking available for each cabin. Each cabin is shown with amenities such as a fire ring with a grill rack, picnic table and nearby dock access.

Space for a centrally located playground is available between the cabins and Liberty Lake dock.



Full Utility Cabin (3)

The cabins offer full electric and water utilities. The cabins are along their own gravel drive with two stalls for parking available for each cabin. Each cabin is shown with amenities such as a fire ring with a grill rack, picnic table and nearby dock access.



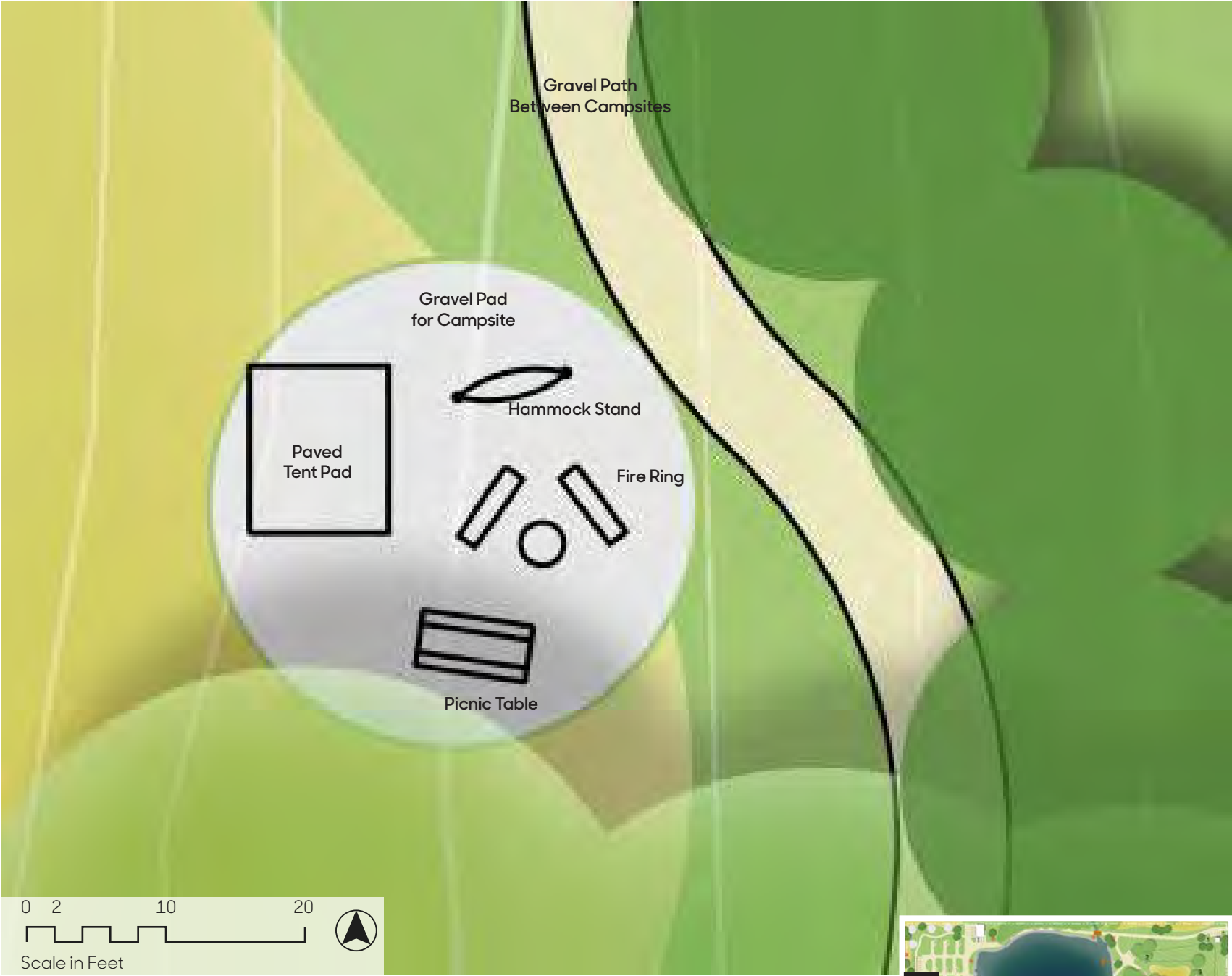
Family Cabin (1)

The largest of the cabins with room available to accommodate twelve people. This cabin offers full service of utilities, parking around the cul-de-sac and a drive for parking.

Amenities shown are fire ring with a grill rack, multiple picnic tables, benches, and access to a private Council ring location.



PRIMITIVE SITE



Enlargement plan of Primitive Camp Site.

These sites will not offer electricity or water. Camp sites are connected along a gravel path leading to the restroom facility and parking.

Camp sites offer a fire ring with a grill rack, picnic table, and concrete pad for the tent.



View of a Primitive Camp Site with amenities.



Primitive Camp Site with gravel walk to restroom/shower facility behind.

R.V. SITE



Enlargement plan of R.V. Sites and Camp Site Parking.

These stalls offer electricity and water hookups. There are six back in parking stalls and three pull through stalls.

The amenities in the drawing show a fire ring with a grill rack, picnic table, wheel stop and hammock poles

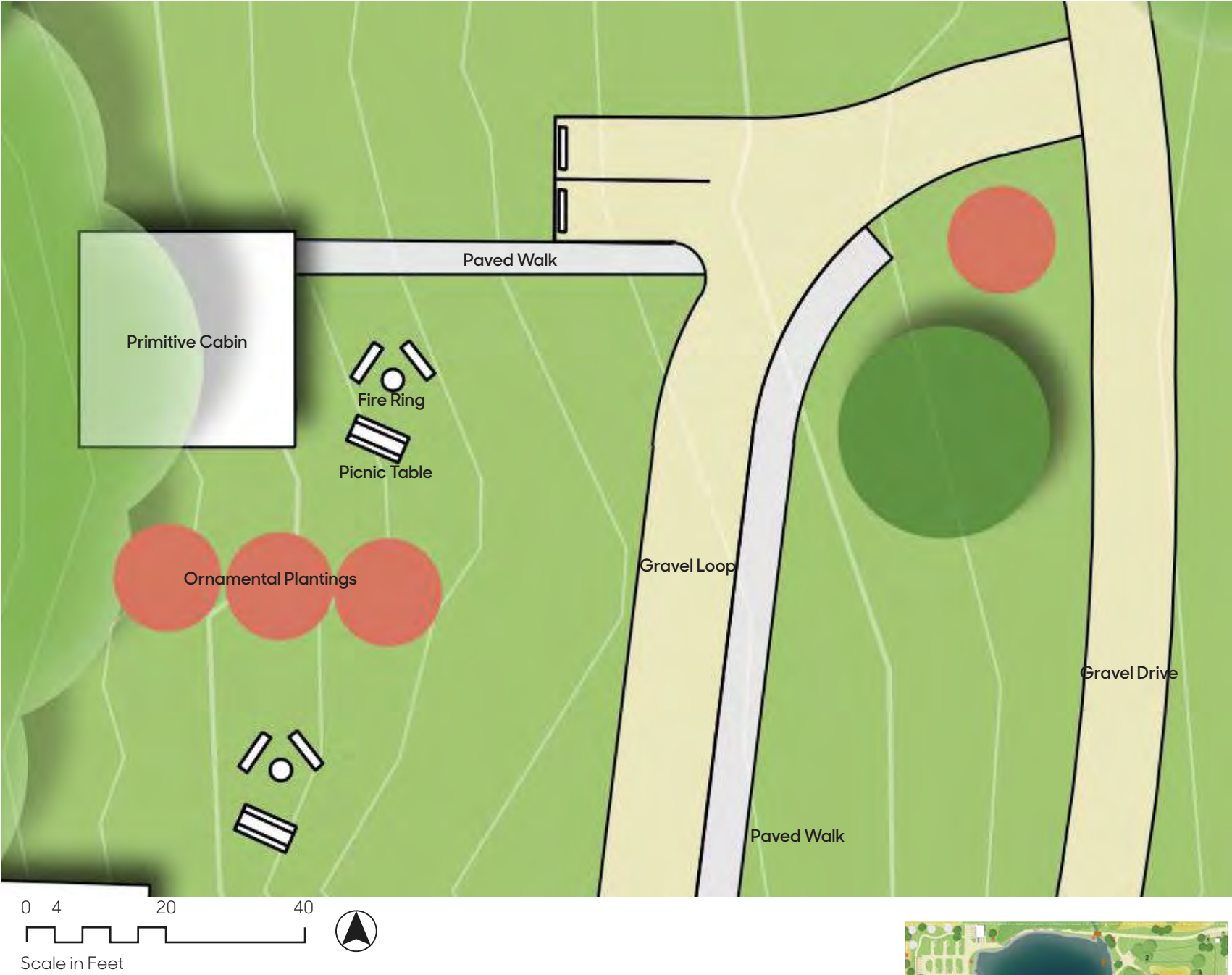


Bird's eye view of R.V. stalls.



R.V. stall with amenities.

PRIMITIVE CABIN



Enlargement plan of Primitive Cabin, walkways, and drive lanes.

Three primitive cabins offer no utilities. They are the closest cabins to the restroom/shower facility. The cabins are along their own gravel drive with two stalls for parking available for each cabin. Each cabin is shown with amenities such as a fire ring with a grill rack, picnic table and nearby dock access.

Space for a centrally located playground is available between the cabins and Liberty Lake dock.



Bird's eye view of all primitive cabins.



View of a Primitive Cabin with amenities, paved walks and nearby playground location.

FULL UTILITY CABIN



Enlargement plan of Full Utility Cabin, walkways, and drive lanes.

The Full Utility Cabins offer full electric and water utilities. The cabins are along their own gravel drive with two stalls for parking available for each cabin. Each cabin is shown with amenities such as a fire ring with a grill rack, picnic table and nearby dock access.

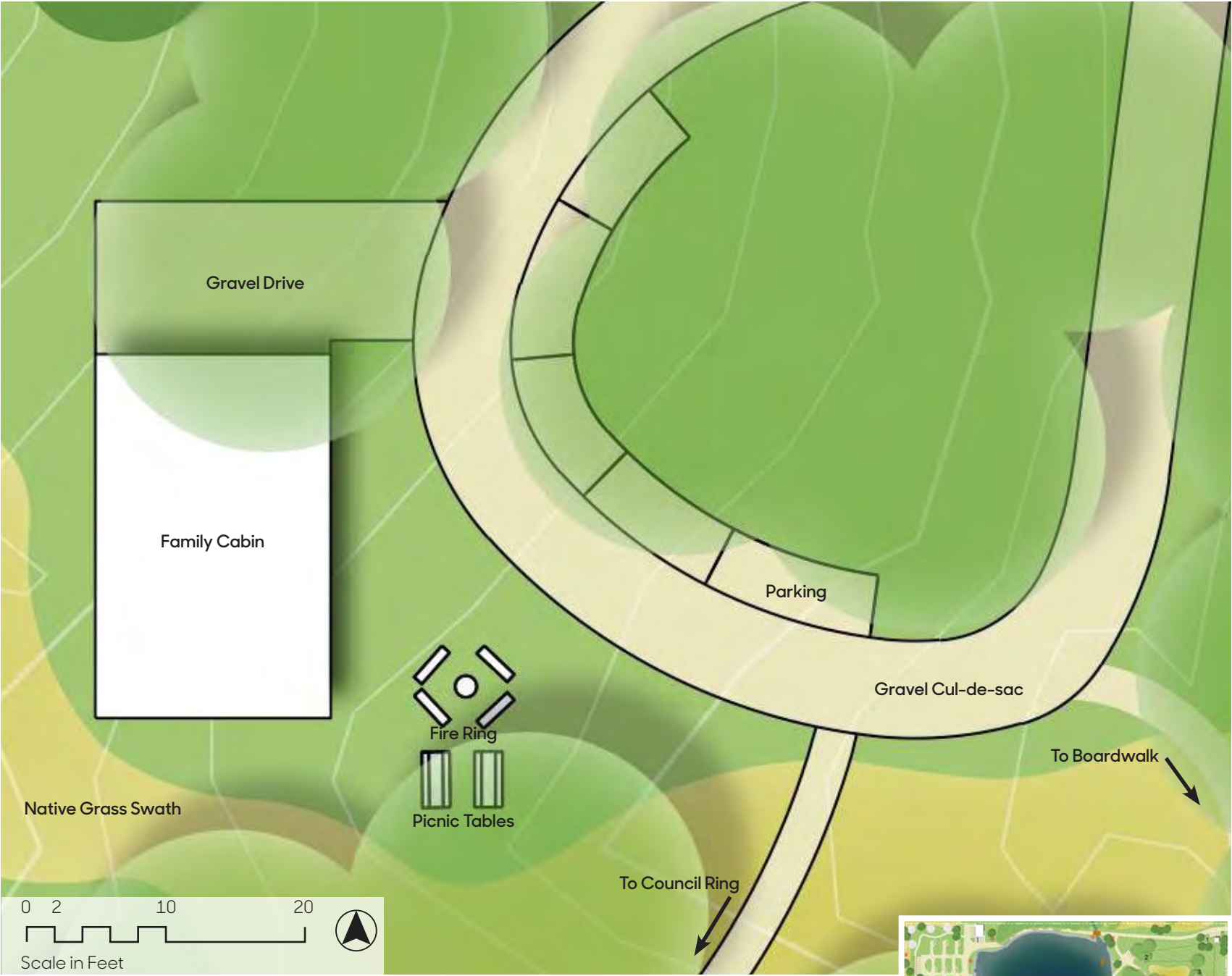


Bird's eye view of all Full Utility Cabins.



View of a Full Utility Cabin with amenities, paved walks and parking stalls.

FAMILY CABIN



Enlargement Plan of Family Cabin, amenities, and cul-de-sac.

The largest of the cabins with room available to accommodate twelve people. This cabin offers full service of utilities, parking around the cul-de-sac and a drive for parking.

Amenities shown are fire ring with a grill rack, multiple picnic tables, benches, and access to a private Council ring location.



Example of a Family Sized Cabin.

PHASING & IMPLEMENTATION

Stage 1

- Remove brush along shoreline of lake
- Remove invasive honeysuckle
- Provide road and bridge maintenance
- Named Shelter House – Lakeview Shelter
- Paint and repair shelter house
- Install grill by shelter house
- Install electricity to shelter house
- Install waste receptacles to reduce litter
- Install temporary Port-A-John for restroom use
- Place entrance, boundary and other informational signage

Stage 2

- Apply for Fish Habitat Stamp Grant
- Rock the shoreline of the lake
- Placement of pea gravel for spawning beds
- Placement of fish habitat
- Installation of removable docks and kayak launcher

Stage 3

- Site work for development
- Utility work for water, sewer and electrical
- Install 3 to 4 primitive cabins
- Construct restroom/shower house
- Construct R.V. and primitive camp sites
- Purchase canoes and kayaks
- Bridge and spillway repairs and upgrade

Stage 4

- Site work for development
- Utility work for water, sewer and electrical
- Install 3 full-service cabins
- Install 1 larger full service cabin
- Provide landscaping around each cabin
- Install cabin amenities: grill, fire ring

Stage 5

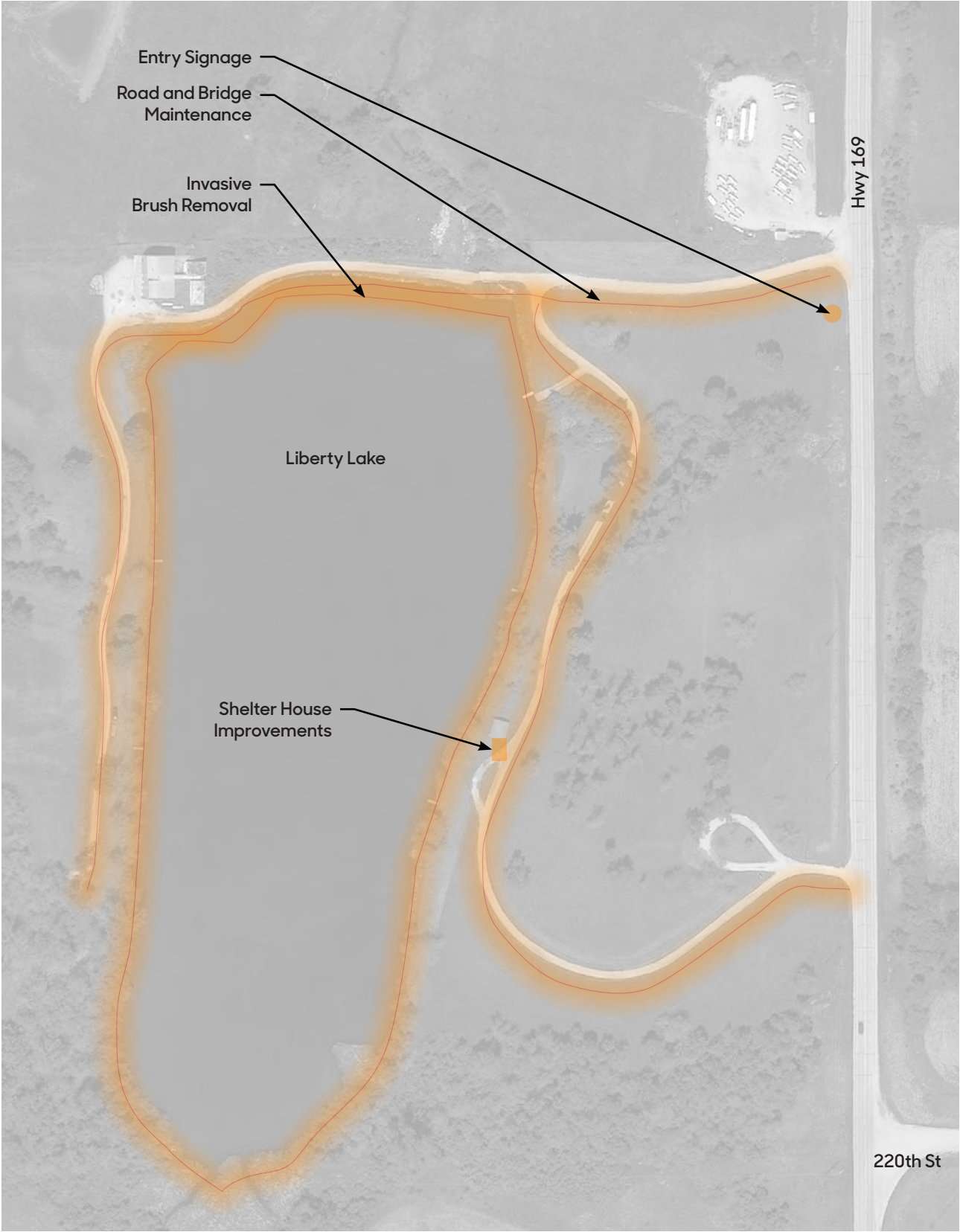
- Planning and design of custom event lodge
- Site work for development
- Utility work for construction
- Construction of Event Lodge
- Landscaping for Event Amphitheater
- Boardwalk for south end of Liberty Lake
- Native Prairie Seeding
- Disc Golf Course



Liberty Lake Master Plan.

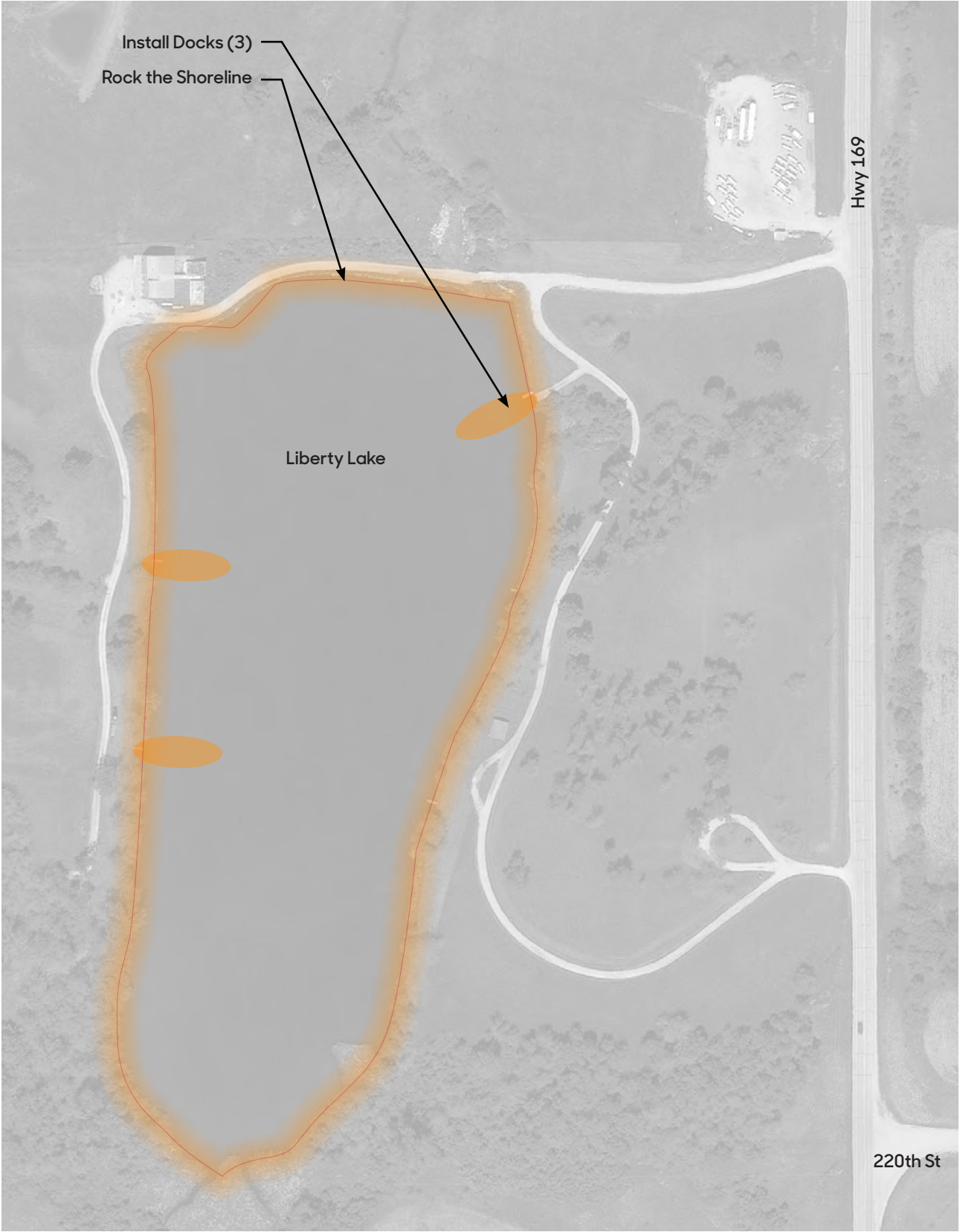
PHASING & IMPLEMENTATION

STAGE 1



Stage 1 Improvements.

STAGE 2



Stage 2 Improvements.

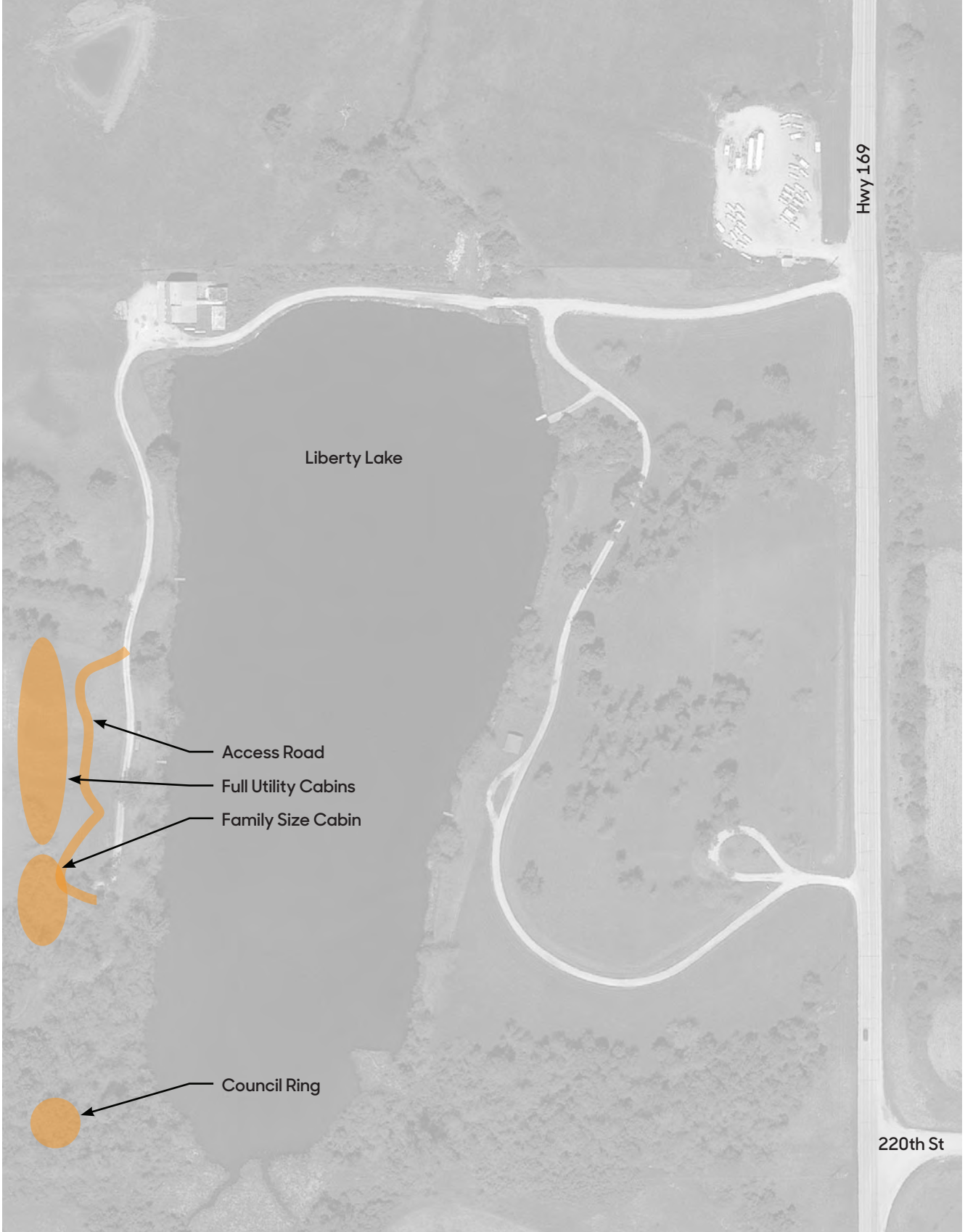
PHASING & IMPLEMENTATION

STAGE 3



Stage 3 Improvements.

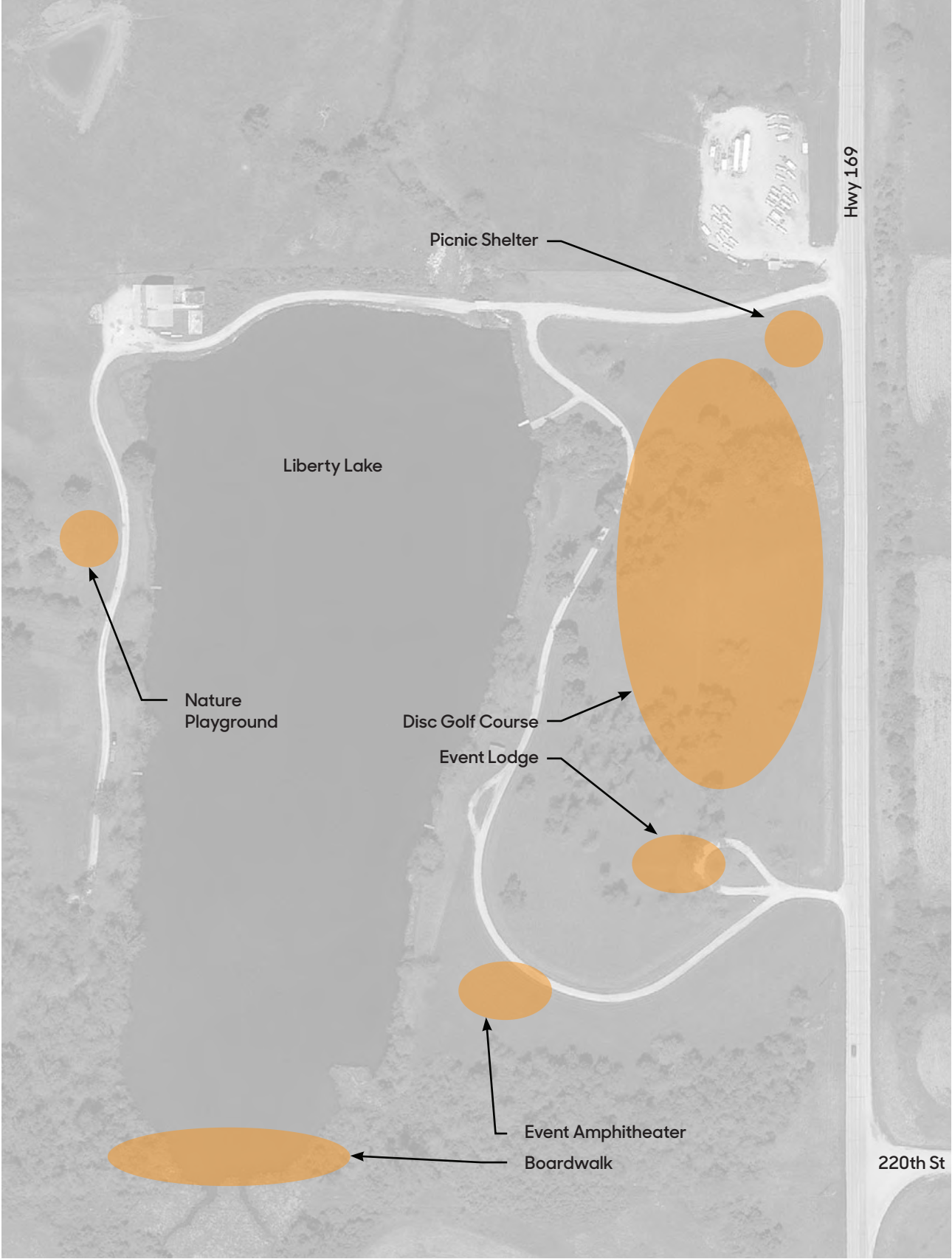
STAGE 4



Stage 4 Improvements.

PHASING & IMPLEMENTATION

STAGE 5



Stage 5 Improvements.

LIBERTY LAKE MASTER PLAN RINGGOLD COUNTY, IOWA

JULY, 2019

RINGGOLD COUNTY CONSERVATION
2205 210th Street.
Mount Ayr, IA 50854
641-464-2787
ringgoldccb@ringgoldcounty.us



JEFFREY L. BRUCE & COMPANY
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300 4th Street
West Des Moines, IA 50265
P: 515.778.8397
www.jlbruce.com

County: Sac

Contact Person: Kristen Bieret

Position: Naturalist

Phone: 712-662-4530 Fax: 712-662-4536

E-mail: sccbnat@gmail.com

Name of Project or Event: Grant Park Spooktacular Drive-Through Edition

Project Budget: Less than \$1,000

List Project Partners: Schaller Crestland Elementary School Students
Industrial Tech Students at East Sac Community High School

Project Description (*In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project*):

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic Sac County Conservation like many other places across Iowa was not holding in-person events for Halloween in the fall of 2020. Naturalist Kristen Bieret didn't want to let that stop her from providing an over-the-top event for the community to participate in for the holiday. With her imagination she began to dream up an event that would encompass large displays throughout the tent campground at Grant Park located just outside the town of Auburn.

The large displays that were created were open for free to the public on the evening of October 3rd from 6pm-9pm. These displays included a pumpkin patch with an 8-foot-tall pumpkin, pumpkin ghosts riding bicycles, over 100 pumpkins created from tree cookies decorated by local elementary school students, and 4-foot pumpkins made by the local Industrial tech class, and haunted jack-o lantern campsite. There were even more displays including a giant sea creature surrounding a fishing boat, a giant 10-foot-tall witch, and giant spider web. It was not just these creations that added to the Spooktacular event, but also the public which decorated their campsites for participants to drive through to conclude their drive through tour. There were over 150 vehicles that attended the event.

Additional information: All of the materials purchased to make this event a success were saved to not only use for future Halloween events but other public programs. There were even more displays than what was listed above, there were just too many to mention! The hundreds of tea lights, fairy lights, and spotlights used which have also been used on night hikes.

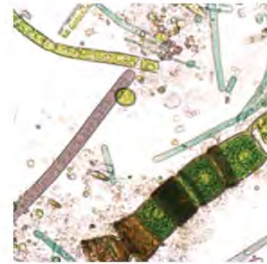
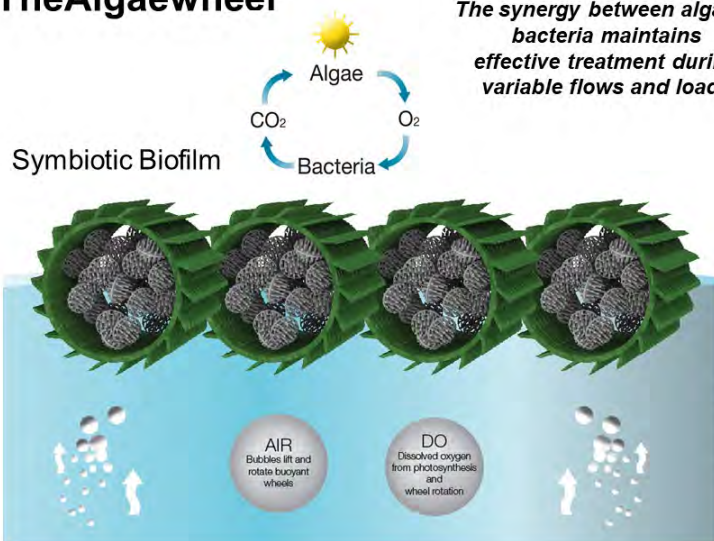








“TheAlgaewheel”



Biofilm containing algae and bacteria at 400x magnification

Algae

Host large and diverse bacterial populations
Produce oxygen and polysaccharides (food) for bacterial growth
Polysaccharides also improve solids settlement

Bacteria

Grow around the algae and inside the wheels on biomedia
Produce CO_2 - used by the algae
Feed on polysaccharides in low flows

POWERED BY
algaewheel

County: Story

Contact Person: Erica Place

Position: Outreach Coordinator

Phone: (515) 232-2516 Fax: _____

E-mail: eplace@storycountyiowa.gov

Name of Project or Event: Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor

Project Budget: \$4.5M

List Project Partners: Iowa State University, Iowa State University Research Park, Story County, Story County Conservation Board, IDOT, IDNR, City of Ames

Project Description (*In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project*):

The Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor is a unique community space located in the ISU Research Park. It showcases conservation techniques, sustainable technologies, environmental education, water quality awareness, and trail connectivity. This 37-acre park brings county, city, university, and state partners together to illustrate synergies among commercial development, quality of life improvements, and natural resource conservation.

The corridor focuses on progressive approaches that demonstrate management of the urban-rural interface for both urban growth and resource protection. The corridor demonstrates a collaborative approach to commercial development that will improve Story County's economy, environment, and quality of life.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1iGAXzKxNB24vrVK8BIsdyKagVtCR2Nvs?usp=sharing>

County: Wapello

Contact Person: Rick Tebbs, Paige Shafer, or Faith Henrichs

Position: Director, Educational Specialist, Naturalist

Phone: 641-682-3091 Fax: none

E-mail: pioneerridge@wapellocounty.org

Name of Project or Event: Pearson Butterfly Park

Project Budget: 2 million dollars

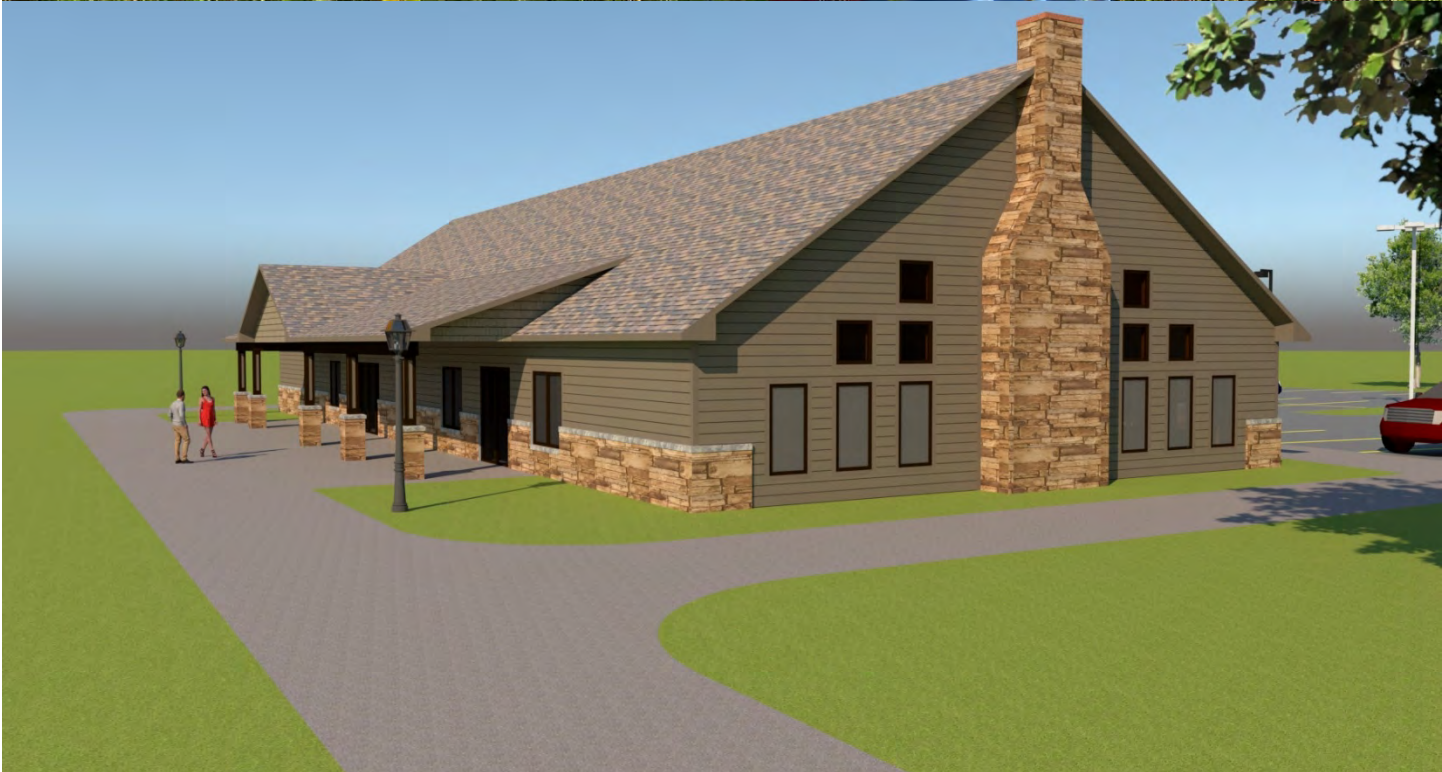
List Project Partners: Wapello County Heritage Foundation, Ottumwa Legacy Foundation, REAP, Wapello County Secondary Roads, John Deere, Iowa DNR, Monarch Consortium, Wapello County Pheasants Forever, Greater Ottumwa Convention and Visitors Bureau and Ottumwa Schools.

Project Description (*In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project*):

In 2007, Keith Pearson donated a 36 acre farm to the Wapello County Conservation Board with the agreement that this land's purpose is to create a natural area and/or park for the benefit of the citizens of Wapello County. As the conservation board sorted through ideas for park development, requesting and receiving public and staff input, it was decided to establish a butterfly park. This park will have an emphasis on the importance of pollinators and pollinator habitat in Iowa, making it truly one of a kind. Pearson Park will provide all visitors the hands on learning experience of the diverse ecosystems of Iowa and what people can do to implement habitat in their property.

We have a three phase plan for Pearson Butterfly Park. The first phase is development and general plan of infrastructure. Much of this phase is completed or nearing completion. Through collaboration with the Wapello County Secondary Roads, Ottumwa Legacy Foundation, Wapello County Board of Supervisors, Wapello County Heritage Foundation and the Wapello County Conservation Board we were able to develop a detailed plan for all aspects of the park. A couple highlights of the proposed plan include; Monarch Lodge, various demonstration pollinator plots, a nature scape, pond and interpretive trails. Phase two consists of fundraising, we hope to fund this project through grants, and partnerships with local businesses. Phase three will be the construction of trails, and buildings. We hope to begin construction in 2024 or sooner. Though Pearson Butterfly Park has yet to be built, the community is very excited about this project. We planted a diverse prairie and sunflowers in the summer of 2020 and we had several thousand visitors from all across Iowa come and explore the area. Wapello County Conservation is grateful for the opportunity to preserve Iowa's rare species and educate all people who have the chance to explore Pearson Butterfly Park.

If you are interested in learning more about the Pearson Butterfly Park please contact Wapello County Conservation Board





County: Woodbury

Contact Person: Dan Heissel

Position: Executive Director

Phone: (712) 258-0838 Fax: _____

E-mail: dheissel@woodburyparks.org

Name of Project or Event: Browns Lake Shoreline Enhancement & Development

Project Budget: \$562,763.00

List Project Partners: Missouri River Historic Development Non-Profit (\$100,000), Gilchrist Foundation (\$50,000), Union Pacific Railroad Foundation (\$15,000), Iowa Fish Habitat Stamp Grants (\$47,000, \$78,013), Woodbury County Conservation Board (\$272,750.00)

Project Description *(In two paragraphs, provide a brief description of the project):*

This project included the clearing of 1300 feet of shoreline that was overgrown with dead and dying cottonwoods that were not safe along with shrubs and undergrowth. The banks were inaccessible by users or anglers and were being heavily eroded. The Iowa DNR Forester did a survey of the trees and shrubs along the lake her recommendation was to remove all of the dead and dying trees along with shrubs and start over. Once the trees and shrubs were removed the banks were sloped and seeded to a grade of 3:1 to 4:1 allowing better use of the shoreline by park users and anglers. The shoreline along the lakes edge was armored with rip rap to keep it from eroding any further thus improving water quality and clarity which in turn helps the fishery. Once the shoreline was cleared and shaped two rock jetties and one handicap fishing pier were constructed.

One of the rock jetties was built handicap accessible with a sidewalk and railings for access. The other rock jetty was paved with 3/8 minus along with its walkway. The rock jetties along with the bank armoring provide habitat for micro invertebrates along with small fish thus improving the quality of the fishery. The fishing pier which extends 130 feet out into the lake and has a 52' x 40' deck on the end with an open area in the middle which allows fishing as well. Fish structure was placed under the jetty to attract and hold fish for the anglers. The design of the railings allows anglers in wheelchairs to be able to pull in their own fish through special slots in the railings. Trees will be planted this spring back from the bank so as not to impede usage by the public but still provide valuable shade. Browns Lake Bigelow Park has an annual usage rate of over 175,000 people. We feel this enhancement will only increase the usage of this park. Please see the attached photos of a before and after look.

Additional information: The Woodbury County Conservation Board would of had a hard time funding this project without its partners in the project. We can't thank our partners enough on their commitment to Woodbury County Conservation Board and its resources!!



Pier looking east with shelter in background. Handicap sidewalk and seeding need to be completed this spring.



Handicap pier looking North with another rock jetty in place. Campground sits east of North jetty. Seeding to be completed this spring.



Looking South at handicap pier with handicap accessible jetty in background



Shoreline before removal of trees and grading of slope to 4 to 1, rip rapping and seeding down to turf grass. Shade trees will be planted back away from shores edge.