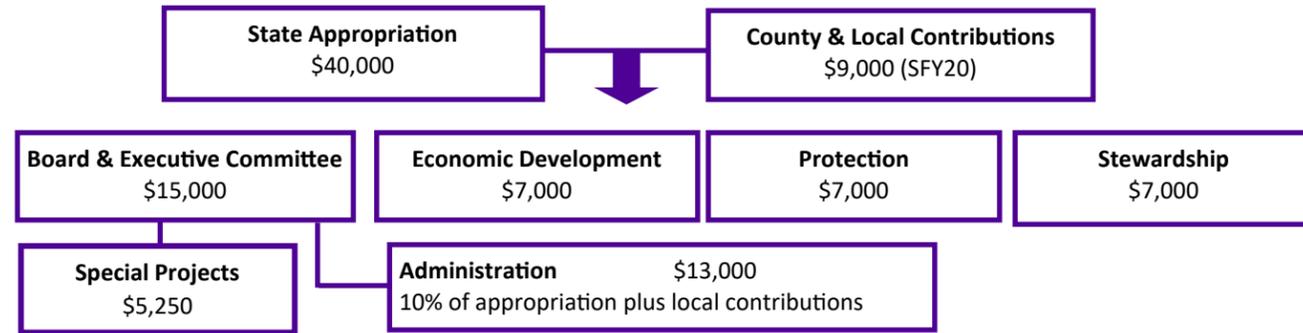


Executive Committee Summary

The Loess Hills Alliance Executive Committee provides leadership to the Board of Directors and ensures that funds appropriated through state funding are leveraged with other sources and used wisely. The most successful use of those funds has included partnering with other organizations, farmers and private land owners to leverage the dollars for the best possible, mutually beneficial outcome within the Loess Hills.

In 2017, the State appropriation to the Loess Hills Alliance was significantly decreased from an historical annual award of \$150,000 to \$40,000. This decrease has significantly impacted the collective ability to support our three objective areas of stewardship, protection and economic development for the region.

The 2020 funds were distributed as follows:



The Loess Hills Alliance has matched state appropriated funds for projects at rates from 3:1 to 35:1. Since SFY2013, the Alliance has supported and leveraged more than \$3 million in projects and resources toward the Loess Hills Region.

Executive Committee

Dawn Snyder, Chair
Rich Pope, Vice Chair

Tammy Bramley, Secretary
Renea Anderson, Treasurer

Graham McGaffin, At Large
Patty McCall, At Large
Robert Benton, At Large

2020 Board of Directors

Plymouth County

Nick Beeck
John Meis
Gary Horton

Monona County

Patty McCall
Tammy Bramley
Alan Dale

Pottawattamie County

Scott Belt
Jeff Franco
Mark Shoemaker

Fremont County

Robert Benton
Dustin Sheldon
Mike Fox

Woodbury County

Dawn Snyder
Marty Pottebaum
Rich Pope

Harrison County

Scott Pape
John Straight
Linda Herman

Mills County

Lonnie Mayberry
Carol Vinton

LHDCA Appointees

Brett Bengard, Iowa Division of Soil Conservation
Renea Anderson, Western Iowa Tourism Region
Graham McGaffin, The Nature Conservancy
Jeff Seago, Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Whitney Reimers, Iowa Bankers Association
Lance Brisbois, Golden Hills RC&D
Brent McCall, Iowa Realtors Association



318 E. Iowa Avenue | Onawa, IA 51040
Phone 712-433-2400

www.loesshillsalliance.com



Our Mission

The Loess Hills Alliance strives to protect special natural and cultural resources while ensuring the economic viability and private property rights of the region through the creation of a common vision for Iowa's Loess Hills.

A region where ...

- The unique land formation, culture, and history of the hills are conserved for future generations
- Areas of special interest are protected from development, soil mining, soil erosion and other visually disruptive activities
- Awareness and educational opportunities are promoted about the unique nature of the region
- Vegetation is managed to encourage native plant and wildlife communities, such as prairie, savanna and oak woodlands
- Regional recreational opportunities and tourism attractions exist and public areas are expanded
- References and resources are available to landowners interested in protecting features on their land
- Local businesses and rural communities are supported

Executive Summary

The Loess Hills Alliance (LHA) Executive Committee met a total of five times over the past fiscal year. The Loess Hills Alliance Full Board met a total of three times. The May and June 2020 meetings were cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The LHA Executive Committee provided funding for some special projects in FY2020. This included funds to enhance public recreational infrastructure at the Blackburn State Park Unit of Waubensie State Park. A new vault toilet restroom facility was constructed and was funded in part by Loess Hills Alliance. LHA Executive Committee also assisted the LHA Protection Committee with funding assistance for a conservation easement on the Hebert property in Plymouth County.

Two new promotional stand-up banners were created by LHA to be used by all committees and groups within the Loess Hills to promote the Loess Hills Alliance and projects.

LHA participated in a Western Iowa Legislative forum in Mondamin in December 2019. LHA member Graham McGaffin presented on the Iowa's Water and Land Legacy and promoted the importance of the Loess Hills to regional legislators.

LHA Executive Committee continues to cooperate with and sponsor the Friends of the Loess Hills State Forest. They are diligently working to obtain their IRS 501c(3) status and should be receiving their own IRS 501c(3) status within the next year.

LHA Executive Committee allocated \$2,000 to the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar in Monona County. This annual educational event began in 1977 to study, educate and share the unique aspects of the loess hills with teachers, landowners and the public. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the seminar was postponed in 2020. LHA funds were not expended, but LHA Executive Committee plans to support future efforts of this important educational seminar.

From the \$40,000 legislative appropriation, the Executive Committee recommended (and the Full Board committed) the following monies to the LHA committees:

Stewardship: \$7,000.00; Protection: \$7,000.00; Economic Development: \$7,000.00; Executive: \$15,000.00 with Administrative fees from Legislative sources budgeted at \$4,000.00, the statutory limit.



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Economic Development Activities

The committee consists of representatives from economic development, conservation, recreation, convention and visitors bureaus, elected officials on local and federal levels, and small businesses and tourist attractions. The committee meets quarterly at a central location. The Economic Development Committee worked collaboratively this year to enhance the economy of the Loess Hills region by:

- Providing assistance and resources for small businesses and community attractions.
- Increasing visitor traffic at recreation facilities, events and area attractions.
- Offering education and technical assistance to business and government agencies, to promote economic development opportunities.

ADVERTISING

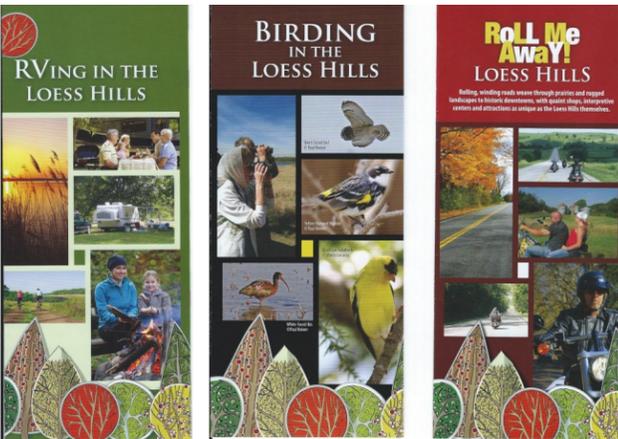
The committee places a high priority on advertising the Loess Hills and promoting businesses and attractions. Advertising was placed in numerous publications that allow information about the Loess Hills to reach into other states as well as here in Iowa.

We continue to have a presence on mycountyparks.com through the Loess Hills counties that have participated with that website. We also continued our regular advertising in the [Sioux City Visitors Guide](#), the [Council Bluffs Visitors Guide](#), and [Our Iowa](#).

WEBSITE AD: VISITWESTERNIOWA.COM

7,525 website impressions were reached on the Western Iowa Tourism Region's (WITR) website. They also continue to fulfill requests for individual information as well as Welcome Centers for the Loess Hills and the counties included. Many calls were fielded this year about what attractions and businesses were open, what campgrounds were available, etc. Contact with attractions, area tourism directors and County Conservation Boards was crucial as information was fluid and changed quickly.

WITR also continues to share and post information on events and attractions on their Facebook page. They have thousands of likes and post events that they receive advance notice of as well as any photos they are provided. The activity on their Facebook page far outpaces the website traffic.



IOWA TRAVEL GUIDE

An ad was placed in the Iowa Travel Guide showing the cover of the Loess Hills Visitors Guide. One was released in the Spring and another in the Fall. This was a new marketing strategy to try to entice more visitors to the State.

GUIDEBOOK

The committee continues to place and distribute the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway™ Guidebook. They are distributed to welcome centers throughout the state and to area attractions and visitors centers as well. The Loess Hills Guidebook has been recognized by industry leaders as one of the gold standards for guidebooks.

FULFILLMENT

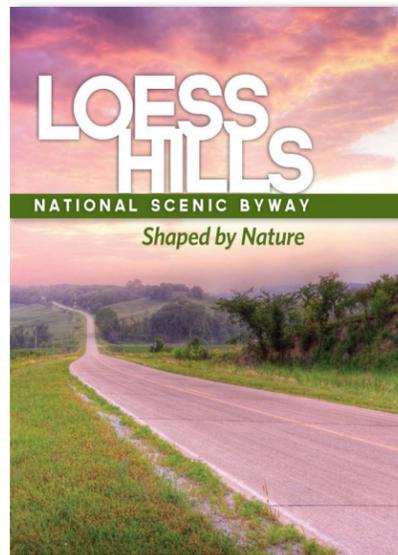
The Western Iowa Tourism Region (WITR) receives and fulfills requests for information about the Loess Hills and the Alliance. For the Fiscal Year running July 2019-June 2020 fulfillment pieces mailed on behalf of the Alliance continued to show high demand. Each year thousands of Loess Hills Visitors Guides are placed with additional information about attractions, byway info and the three brochures for Birding, RVing and Motorcycling being included as well. There is a direct effect on requests for Loess Hills information that can be seen in conjunction with the advertising that is placed. As soon as an ad comes out, the inquiry rate rises. People are also asked where they heard about the Loess Hills. Their responses help drive the advertising strategy.

BROCHURES

The brochures that feature birding, motorcycling and RVing are in demand. They continue to be placed in welcome centers and area attractions and businesses. Several printings have been necessary to keep up with the demand for them and yet another reprinting is being planned.

TRUCK WRAP

A 53 foot semi-truck is traveling around Iowa showcasing the Loess Hills. This is a partnership with the Iowa Tourism Office and the trucks are part of the Iowa Alcohol Beverages Division (ABD).



Protection Activities

The Protection Committee expended \$12,500 in 2020 for two projects: a conservation easement on the Hebert property in Plymouth County led by The Nature Conservancy (\$8,500), and a Vegetation Management project in Monona County led by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

The two projects both were reviewed by the Protection Committee and submitted to the full Board with a recommendation to fund. The Executive Committee awarded an additional \$4,000 to the Hebert conservation easement to increase the award to the full amount requested in the proposal.



Loess Hills after vegetation management, Monona County

The Monona County Vegetation Management project will conduct restoration activities performed by the Conservation Corps of Iowa on land owned by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Vegetation management will focus on Eastern Red Cedar removal. The project will add to the ongoing restoration of

Loess Hills properties located between Turin State Preserve and the Loess Hills State Forest/Preparation Canyon State Park. The Loess Hills National Scenic Byway runs along the northern and western border of the property being restored. LHA funding will be matched 3:1 by other funding sources.



Hebert property, Plymouth County

The Hebert conservation easement will permanently protect a working farm in the Loess Hills. The Hebert property is currently farmed by a young farmer who is interested in continuing to farm the property but wishes to protect against future conversion of the property for rural-residential development and livestock confinement facilities, both of which are increasingly common uses of properties in the area. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has committed to fund 50% of the conservation easement value. LHA funding will be matched 14:1.

The Loess Hills region includes some of Iowa's most precious cultural, historic and natural resources. Since the 1980's, **two nationally significant intrinsic qualities have been verified in the region— natural areas and Prehistoric cultural resources.** The unique geological and topographic features of the hills, the extensive natural and semi-natural grasslands and forests and the many archaeological sites found in this one geologic landform create a treasure for the region. **More than 35,000 acres of land in the Loess Hills are in permanent protection.**



Stewardship Activities

The Stewardship Committee continued to financially support the private lands position employed by Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quails Forever. This position is partnered with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide wildlife technical assistance to farmers and private landowners. In FY20 the biologists had more than 500 landowners contacts and developed conservation plans, burn plans, wildlife plans, and habitat proposals.

Jason Andersen started as a Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist in 2015 and transferred to replace Nic Salick. Jason now covers Harrison, Pottawattamie, and Shelby Counties and is based out of the Council Bluffs USDA Field Office. In 2020, Jason delivered four workshops focused on prairie reconstruction and management. He also worked with landowners to impact more than 260 acres of Loess Hills habitats of Harrison and Pottawattamie Counties, including approximately 40 acres of remnant prairie.

Stewardship also committed funds to the Loess Hills Cooperative Burn Week and Hitchcock Nature Center BioBlitz, but neither event happened due to COVID-19. The committee will issue an RFP for new projects in early 2021.

