Kossuth County Conservation Board, Regular Monthly Meeting
Water's Edge Nature Center
October 12, 2026 5:30 P.M.

Present: Miller; Rasmussen; Ristau; Young; Beenken; Fosado; Schmidt; Wille

Absent: Eichenberger

Guests Present: None

Chairman Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

A motion was made by Miller and seconded by Young to approve the September meeting minutes with the corrected edits. The motion passed unanimously.

The Naturalist report was presented by Wille: 5 public programs were given for 76 people; 30 school programs were given for 709 students, 0 other student programs were given; Facebook posts included 16 posts with 32,714 reached and 18,165 engaged. Other accomplishments included attending board and staff meetings, curriculum development, live animal maintenance, attended Shive zoom meeting, attended Soil & Water meeting, attended Wellness meeting, attended Foundation meeting, attended a Grant workshop, Julie attended Fall Conference, emptied campground and nature center recycling.

Chairman Rassmussen recognized closed session law, requiring the sessions needing to be recorded for future procedures and compliance.

An update was given on the status of the Siems fishing jetties. Operations Supervisor Schmidt informed the board that the jetties were completed September 18th. Staff had to approve more materials for the North jetty due to a deep hole found, resulting in increased costs from the prior approved bid. The North jetty, as a result of the increased materials, ended up being 5 feet shorter than what was planned. Miller motioned to approve the cost share agreement, Young seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

An update was provided on the status of the purchase of the new 2027 F-350 truck. The upgrade from a 2003 F-250 was a great purchase to better handle equipment safely.

Maintenance Tech Beenken gave an update on the Buffalo Creek Nature Preserve observation deck project. In partnership with the AHS Construction class, work started the week of October 5th.

Operations Supervisor Schmidt informed the board of the core samples work completed by the subcontractors ABE (Allander Butzke Engineers Inc), samples were collected on the Smith Lake Dam around the lake and at the spoil site, Wildwood Wildlife Area.

Operations Supervisor Schmidt also informed the board that the WRAC grant (Water Recreation Access Cost Share) was submitted a few days before the deadline in the end of September. The total asking of the grant was $149,000. The cost share is a 3:1 share with DNR at 75% and KCCB responsible for 25%. The plans and estimated costs were provided by partner Shive – Hattery.

Maintenance Tech Beenken provided an update on the Smith Lake Restoration Donor Packet. The packet was produced to serve as a brochure to provide to future donors of the project. Beenken also provided an updated funds-tracking sheet for the Lake Restoration. Beenken informed the board of the status schedule provided in the Professional Services Agreement for phase 2 signed on May 22, 2026. Discussion was held about when, who, and how we go about fundraising a significant amount of funds. Board agreed to have Naturalist Wille get into contact with the Water's Edge Nature Center Foundation Board for potential funding guidance and partnership.

Operations Supervisor Schmidt informed the board that the Community Employment of Trevour Roney through Ex-Op was completed and was a great experience with hopes to bring back in the spring next year. Schmidt also informed the board that Seasonal Maintenance Tech Mark Jordan completed the year October 9, 2026.

The status of the Eagle Scout project at Siems park is unknown at the time. Operations Supervisor informed the board that he last heard from the Scout about a month ago when in contact about items the Scout needs to consider when completing the project.

Chairman Rasmussen and the rest of the board offered the position of Executive Director to Naturalist Wille. Wille will begin the role of Director starting October 19, 2026 at the salary of $70,000. Upon this appointment it was discussed to reopen the Nature Center on Mondays to the public on November 30, 2026; when it is hoped to be back to full staff.

Maintenance Tech Beenken presented a Yearly Meeting Room Rental Package on behalf of Office Manager Kris Thul. The Yearly Rental Package proposed was $40/hour for three hours once a month. Part of the package stipulation is that the rental rate for the year must be paid upfront and with no refunds. Ristau motioned to accept the proposed package with the package being available for January – December 2027 only at this time, Miller seconded. Young opposed.

Naturalist Wille proposed the increase in Part-Time Naturalist Julie Foasdo's vacation and sick leave benefits to appropriately reflect the increase of duties. Young motioned to accept the proposal with Ristau seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Maintenance Tech Beenken proposed installing the new logo, developed about a year ago, on the new 2027 F-350 truck along with select current vehicles. Terri motioned to approve the Sign Works Ink bid of $622.50 with Ristau seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Operations Supervisor Schmidt proposed the purchase of a Land Plane attachment for the skid loader. The attachment will benefit in upkeep of wildlife area and park lanes. Young motioned to accept the bid by Deitering Brother's Inc for $2,700 with Ristau seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

Operations Supervisor Schmidt brought to attention the riser on the septic tank for the Smith Lake South Campground facilities is starting to fail. Schmidt presented the bid to have Thompson Sewer and Drain complete the repair for a bid of $1,521.98. Tom motioned to approve the quote. Young seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

An update on the status of the Crail safety concern was provided by Operations Supervisor Schmidt. It appears to be a tile and when the river rises it comes back into the outlet causing the havoc. Reding's Excavating bid the removal of the outlet pipe and to fill the holes between for $2,000 - $2,500. Exploratory dig will cost extra. Schmidt discussed the need to do some exploratory digging of the tile. Young motioned to have Reding's pull outlet and fill holes with some exploratory digging for a max price of $3,500. Ristau seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Operations Supervisor Schmidt presented quotes of computers to update his. Schmidt has been operating on a device from 2018. It is in the budget to rotate through the staff yearly to upgrade office equipment. Tom motioned to accept the bid of a Dell desktop monitor and hard drive for $1,650. Young seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The board approved of holding the November board meeting on Monday the 9th at 5:30 P.M. at the Water's Edge Nature Center. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Ristau and seconded by Young to approve the 29 bills submitted for approval. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Ristau and seconded by Young to adjourn at 6:58pm. The motion passed unanimously.