

**MADISON COUNTY**  
**5-YEAR REAP PLAN**  
**2026-2030**



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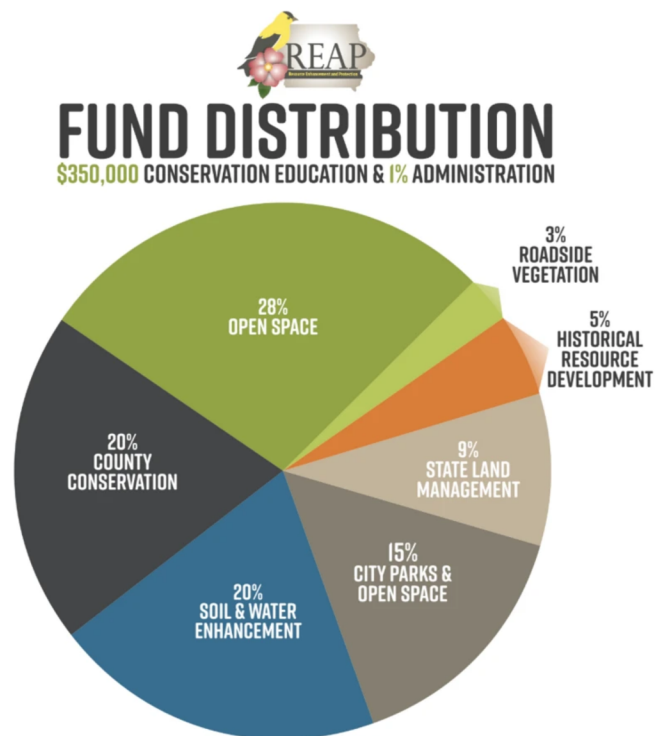
# ABOUT REAP

## Overview

The Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program is vital for Iowa, playing a crucial role in preserving the state's natural and cultural resources. Established in 1989, REAP aims to promote environmental conservation, recreation, education, and cultural development. This program provides essential funding for projects that enhance Iowa's parks, trails, and wildlife habitats, promoting biodiversity and environmental wellness.

REAP collaborates with citizens, communities, and various organizations to improve and sustain Iowa's natural, cultural, and historical resources. Funding comes exclusively from the state's Environment First Fund and the sale of natural resources license plates.

These funds are divided using the formula shown to the right, which allocates resources to projects that enhance public lands and parks, while also supporting soil and water conservation initiatives to ensure sustainable agriculture and guard against erosion and flooding. REAP also supports environmental education throughout the state.



Additionally, REAP invests in education and historical preservation, strengthening community engagement and awareness about Iowa's rich heritage. This program fosters a balance between economic development and environmental stewardship, securing a resilient and vibrant future for Iowa's landscapes and communities.

In Madison County, known for its rich history of cultural, historic, and natural resources, REAP provides critical support for developing and maintaining resources that offer opportunities for outdoor recreation, environmental stewardship, cultural development, and historic preservation. Through this focused funding approach, REAP not only supports immediate projects but also invests in the long-term sustainability and prosperity of Iowa's natural and cultural landscapes.

# Madison County REAP Committee

The Madison County REAP Committee is composed of members who represent all municipalities, school districts, farming organizations, wildlife and conservation groups, and county supervisors.

## Madison County REAP Committee Leadership

Chair: Amy Warnke, Madison County Conservation Board

Vice Chairperson: Anna Golightly, Madison Co. Soil & Water Conservation District

## Committee Organizations:

### Municipalities & Local Government

- City of Bevington
- City of Earlham
- City of East Peru
- City of Macksburg
- City of Patterson
- City of St. Charles
- City of Truro
- City of Winterset
- Madison County Board of Supervisors

### School Districts

- Earlham Community School District
- Interstate 35 Community School District
- Winterset Community School District

### Local Conservation Agencies

- Madison County Conservation Board
- Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Natural Resources Conservation Service - Madison County
- Winterset Parks & Recreation

### Other Community Organizations

- Covered Bridges Scenic Byway
- Delta Waterfowl
- For Lands Sake!
- Madison County Covered Bridge Chapter of Pheasants Forever
- Madison County Farm Bureau
- Madison County Foundation for Environmental Education
- Madison County Historical Society
- Madison County Sportsmen's Club

# Roadside Vegetation

## Overview

Roadside vegetation management offers numerous benefits to our community by contributing to human safety, native habitat preservation, and scenic beauty. By strategically planting native grasses and wildflowers along roadways, the risk of accidents can be reduced. These plants help manage surface water runoff, minimizing road flooding and erosion while improving sight lines for signage and potential hazards.

Additionally, this vegetation provides essential habitats for local wildlife, supporting biodiversity by offering food and shelter for birds, insects, and small mammals. Moreover, the vibrant array of native plants enhances the county's natural scenery, creating picturesque drives that attract tourists and contribute to a sense of community pride.

These benefits underscore the importance of maintaining and expanding roadside vegetation in the area.

## Priorities

- Support the new Roadside Vegetation Manager position, employed by the county supervisors, to oversee management of county right-of-way areas.
- Maintain sight lines for human safety by managing encroaching brush and potential obstructions.
- Control invasive species such as teasel, honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, and autumn olive.
- Promote native plant communities through management and planting.
- Encourage the addition of wetland plants in areas with frequently flooded roadsides.
- Assist local partners in securing technical assistance and grants to install colorful native plantings that beautify the byway and enhance the traveler's experience.
- Improve scenic quality and aesthetics by removing general litter along roadways.
- Promote the use of Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) practices.

# Historical Resources

## Overview

The historical resources in Madison County, Iowa, are vital for preserving the area's cultural heritage and history, offering insights into the past. Key attractions include the historical courthouse square and the iconic covered bridges. These landmarks provide educational opportunities about significant regional events and figures.

Moreover, these resources enhance community pride and cohesion, fostering a sense of belonging. Preserving them supports tourism, attracting visitors interested in Madison County's unique history and boosting the local economy.

In summary, these resources are crucial for maintaining the cultural legacy and enriching the community's future, ensuring Madison County's history remains vibrant.

## Priorities

- Advocate for the restoration of covered bridges, with a special focus on ensuring the structural integrity of the Holliwell Bridge.
- Restore veterans' headstones in county cemeteries.
- Enhance interpretive signage at historical sites and attractions to emphasize asset preservation, enrich visitor experiences, and share the stories of Madison County's people and events.
- Encourage local towns to rejuvenate their structures and pursue recognition as historic places.
- Protect viewsheds along the scenic byway.
- Prioritize preserving economically viable sites while acknowledging that not everything old is historic.
- Educate the community on the importance of historic structures through engaging field trips and informative brochures.
- Collaborate with partners to preserve, protect, and enhance the historic resources for the enjoyment of future generations.

## Recent Achievements

- Restored bridges and cabin in Winterset City Park.
- Installed interpretive panels in Carver Park.
- Secured funding for facade renovations aimed at stabilizing and promoting downtown storefronts.
- Investigated the historical significance of the courthouse square by documenting the history of 120 historic buildings.
- Invested in security cameras to protect historic structures.
- Ranked #3 for Best Town Square in the country by USA Today.

# State Land Management

## Overview

State land in Madison County, Iowa, plays a crucial role in the county's environmental, economic, and social health. Environmentally, these lands improve water quality by acting as natural filters, reducing erosion, and preventing pollutants from entering waterways. They also preserve habitats for various species, including some endangered or threatened ones.

Economically, state lands boost Madison County's economy by supporting outdoor recreation industries. Activities like hiking, fishing, camping, and hunting attract residents and tourists, generating revenue and creating jobs. These recreational opportunities promote healthier lifestyles and foster a deeper connection with nature among residents.

Socially, state lands offer spaces for community gathering, providing a sense of shared heritage and identity, and promoting stewardship and responsibility for natural resources. Managing these lands is essential for sustainable resource use.

Overall, Madison County's state lands are invaluable assets, intricately linked to the county's environmental sustainability, economic vitality, and social cohesion.

## Priorities

- Preserve and enhance open recreational spaces while maximizing public access.
- Restore areas to their native species and support the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems within the byway corridor.
- Protect state land resources from soil degradation and improve water quality and quantity by implementing practices that control runoff, manage flood risks, and educate the public.
- Safeguard and increase public ownership of natural resources within the byway corridor, enhancing the quality of these resources and offering outstanding outdoor experiences for residents and visitors.
- Create more wetlands and facilitate public hunting opportunities.
- Implement science-based management protocols and provide education and resources for land legacy transitions.

## Recent Achievements

- Created the Heritage Hills Wildlife Management Area for public land access.
- Created Kirke Woods Wildlife Management Area.

# City Parks & Open Space

## Overview

City parks and public open spaces play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for residents. These areas provide a natural backdrop for community gatherings, helping to foster a sense of shared heritage and identity among the community. By offering opportunities for outdoor activities like picnicking, hiking, fishing, and camping, these spaces promote healthier lifestyles and allow residents to connect with nature. Moreover, these communal areas serve as vital venues for social interaction. They help build social unity and encourage the stewardship of natural resources.

In summary, the parks and open spaces in Madison County are integral to the county's social well-being. They significantly contribute to a vibrant and cohesive community life, enriching the lives of all who live here.

## Priorities

- Sustain the maintenance of parks and open spaces by adding sidewalks and trails that connect the school to these vital resources, ensuring ongoing maintenance and enhancements. Enhance accessibility by incorporating and installing recreational trails.
- Restore native habitats to promote biodiversity, and implement science-based management such as Forest Stand Improvement, prescribed burns, and species inventories. Encourage and support the restoration, preservation, and protection of the natural and historical features of Winterset City Park, including urban forest management plans such as thinning and invasive species control.
- Offer diverse opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with our natural and recreational resources along the byway throughout the year, catering to various ages and abilities. These opportunities should be distributed across multiple locations rather than concentrated in just one or two areas.
- Prioritize high-diversity biomes for active protection through conservation easements or purchases.
- Continue to strengthen network connections between city, county, and community partners for long-term plans.

## Recent Achievements

- Winterset Parks & Recreation completed a needs assessment in 2021.
- Several city parks recently received funding from the Greater Madison County Community Foundation.

# Soil & Water Enhancement

## Overview

Soil and water enhancement is key to sustaining agricultural productivity and environmental health in Madison County, Iowa.

Soil is the foundation for our farms, towns, and natural areas, but when it erodes it is a significant water pollutant. Improving soil health and reducing erosion is important for conserving our valuable topsoil as well as reducing sediment delivery to lakes, rivers, and streams. Strategically placed conservation practices that reduce and filter runoff can help prevent excessive nutrients and chemicals from entering waterbodies. Establishing and maintaining perennial cover provides benefits to soil and water while also providing habitat and supporting biodiversity. Soil and water enhancement is not just for rural areas; Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) can help reduce runoff in urban areas.

Concerted efforts to conserve and build soil, and to protect and improve water quality, are vital for continued agricultural productivity and achieving ecological balance. Soil and water enhancement directly affects quality of life for the community by ensuring a stable, healthy environment for current and future generations to live and flourish.

## Priorities

- Continue to support watershed protection efforts, especially for Cedar Lake.
- Increase awareness and support of water quality monitoring programs.
- Reduce soil loss through county-wide implementation of conservation practices.
- Increase adoption of soil health practices such as cover crops, no-till, etc.
- Promote implementation of strategically placed buffer strips, wetlands, and other conservation practices that protect and improve water quality.
- Establish and maintain perennial cover.
- Promote Stormwater BMPs (e.g., rain gardens and native landscaping, pervious paving, etc.) in urban areas through demonstration sites and interpretive signage.
- Increase the public's knowledge of soil and water enhancement opportunities (information about conservation practices and financial assistance programs).

## Recent Achievements

- Madison SWCD adopted its 5-Year Soil and Water Resource Conservation Plan in 2022.
- Since 2021, Madison SWCD has hosted or partnered on over a dozen events such as field days, workshops, and outreach to schools.
- Over 3,000 acres signed up for cover crops with cost share in fall 2025.

# County Conservation (Parks/Facilities)

## Overview

County conservation efforts aim to protect natural resources and enhance habitat quality through effective land management and outreach. This strategy is inspired by successful models that promote development and safeguard county parks for future generations.

Initiatives are currently underway to improve habitat quality for native wildlife and preserve the local natural resources. Efforts include cedar tree removal to facilitate prairie rehabilitation and a barn owl nesting box program. Conservation efforts continue to utilize research-based data including floristic surveys, bat monitoring programs, and migratory bird data.

Simultaneously, county conservation offers the community valuable opportunities for outdoor recreation. Park facilities are continuously maintained and enhanced to accommodate the growing population. By hosting events focused on conservation, the community can engage more profoundly with their natural environment. Ongoing discussions strive to strengthen connections within Madison County, fostering a more integrated experience that highlights nature and conservation.

## Priorities

- Raise awareness about the existence and functions of parks while promoting county conservation programs, events, and opportunities for visitors.
- Organize events to make use of available facilities and increase facility usage.
- Safeguard county conservation resources against soil degradation and loss, while enhancing water quality and quantity through strategies that manage runoff and mitigate flood risks.
- Prioritize effective land management practices utilizing available data from recent research projects and sustain existing resources to ensure their continued availability.
- Conduct additional land inquiries when areas of interest arise where the addition of land would be a benefit to the current park system and resource management goals.
- Pursue ongoing discussions regarding trail connections within Madison County.

## Recent Achievements

- Madison County Conservation Center - New facility opened for public use in May 2025.
- Successful barn owl fledglings resulting from nest box project.
- Cedar tree removal completed at Criss Cove Park and Clanton Creek Natural Resource Area to increase the quality of prairie habitat.

# Conservation Education

## Overview

Conservation education helps Madison County connect people of all ages with the land. Through hands-on learning, outreach to youth groups, programs for seniors, and support for families exploring natural areas, it builds curiosity, care, and a deeper understanding of the county's landscapes. By engaging residents in activities like tree planting, wildlife monitoring, and environmental stewardship projects, it fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for the natural resources that define the county. This connection not only enhances local knowledge about sustainable land practices but also encourages a community-wide commitment to preserving the county's rich biodiversity, soil health, and water quality. As residents develop a greater appreciation for their environment, they are more likely to champion policies and practices that protect these resources, ensuring that Madison County remains a vibrant, healthy place for generations to come.

## Priorities

- Provide robust hands-on learning experiences for students.
- Engage in active outreach to youth organizations such as 4-H, FFA, Scouts, school classes and clubs.
- Provide opportunities for senior adults.
- Develop publications for youth or families that encourage exploration of natural areas, including flora and fauna and iconic sites; continue to get people on landscapes within the county to raise awareness and build enthusiasm.
- Engage visiting children and families, educate children who live in the corridor, and encourage byway travelers to return with children to explore the scenic byway, parks, natural areas, and other resources.
- Continue to build and expand partnerships with local conservation agencies and other community organizations; collaborate on project.
- Preserve community knowledge on historical, cultural, and natural resources and develop tools for presenting that information to the community.

## Recent Achievements

- Developed "Cultivating Connections" program; kick-off event held in April 2024.
- Madison County Conservation Center, with educational exhibits, classroom, and event space, opened in May 2025.
- Hosted educational workshops (Ensuring Your Land's Legacy, Prescribed Fire) at new Conservation Center in 2025.
- Worked with partners on NEA Big Read grant; "Madison County's Most Wanted" community-wide book club kick-off event held in November 2025.
- Engaged with schools (classroom visits, Husky Help Day community service projects, Conservation Club of Winterset).
- Continued to host annual Halloween Hike/Harvest Festival.

# REAP Funding

## Overview

Since the start of the REAP program in 1989, Madison County has received \$2,722,026. Total funds include per county and per population allocations, grant awards, and soil and water enhancement allocations.

## REAP Allocations 2020-2024

### 2020

- Per Population Allocation: \$3,709
- Per County Allocation: \$7,421
- Grants
  - Madison County Conservation Center: \$275,300
  - Winterset City Park Historic District Nomination: \$9,600
  - Badger Creek WMA Spray Regrowth: \$4,995
  - Heritage Hills WMA 3<sup>rd</sup> Mowing Prairie Reconstruction: \$4,500
  - Heritage Hills WMA Grassland Restoration: \$9,993
  - Heritage Hills WMA Construct 2 parking lots: \$4,991
- Soil & Water
  - Allocations for practices: \$6,863
  - Badger Creek Lake Watershed Project: \$750
  - Forestry & Native Vegetation: \$5,099
  - North Thompson River Quality Project: \$30,250

### 2021

- Per Population Allocation: \$3,704
- Per County Allocation: \$7,291
- Grants
  - Madison County Courthouse Exterior Restoration: \$50,000
- Soil & Water
  - Allocations for practices: \$6,984
  - Forestry & Native Vegetation: \$2,304
  - North Thompson River Water Quality Project: \$10,527

### 2022

- Per Population Allocation: \$3,622
- Per County Allocation: \$7,157
- Grants
  - Heritage Hills WMA acquisition: \$290,175
- Soil & Water
  - Allocations for practices: \$7,965
  - Forestry & Native Vegetation: \$2,304
  - North Thompson River Water Quality Project: \$10,890

# REAP Funding

## REAP Allocations 2020-2024 Continued

2023

- Per Population Allocation: \$3,682
- Per County Allocation: \$7,168
- Grants
  - Local Property Tax Reimbursement: \$1,148
- Soil & Water
  - Allocations for practices: \$7,587
  - Forestry & Native Vegetation: \$2,326
  - North Thompson River Water Quality Project: \$11,333

2024

- Per Population Allocation: \$4,086
- Per County Allocation: \$7,776
- Grants
  - Local Property Tax Reimbursement: \$1,220
  - Rolling Hills WMA Parking Lot Development: \$11,011
- Soil & Water
  - Allocations for practices: \$7,789
  - Forestry & Native Vegetation: \$2,591
  - North Thompson River Water Quality Project: \$3,950

**Total Allocations 2020-2024: \$838,415**



**Pictured Left:**  
Madison County Conservation Center,  
Supported by REAP

# Information & Contacts

## Resource Enhancement & Protection Program (REAP)

- <https://www.iowadnr.gov/programs-services/resource-enhancement-protection-reap>
- REAP Coordinator: Michelle Wilson (michelle.wilson@dnr.iowa.gov)

## Madison County Conservation Board

- <https://www.madisoncountyparks.org/>
- 515-462-3536

## Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District

- <https://www.madison-swcd.org/>
- 515-462-4884 ext. 3

