



A great outdoors!

BIG HOLLOW FINISHING TOUCHES

2016 FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN



Big Hollow is up and running but there is a need for some finishing touches. With grants and some matching money from local donors, Big Hollow will truly become *a great outdoors*.

Partners for Conservation Foundation

PO Box 714
Burlington, Iowa 52601

Des Moines County Conservation

13700 Washington Rd.
West Burlington, Iowa 52655
(319) 753-8260

HISTORY OF BIG HOLLOW

Big Hollow Recreation Area was a dream in 1965 and the first parcel of land was acquired in 1966. Over the years with grants and donations more land was acquired and what began literally just as a big hollow, now is a 798 acre multi-use recreation area.

Big Hollow Recreation Area is located in Franklin Township, 15 miles from Burlington, or about three miles southwest of Mediapolis. Paved roads lead to the north entrance to the park.



Figure 1: Big Hollow sign at park entrance.

Big Hollow is a park for all ages during all seasons. The park now provides visitors from near and far ample boating, fishing, swimming and camping opportunities. It contains the Witte Observatory and the Jack Polson model airplane field. It has over ten miles of trails, some of which are bicycle and equestrian accessible. There are multiple picnic shelters, a 3-D archery course, four shooting ranges, an off-grid rental cabin, and an RV campground. The park is host to numerous public events including the Youth Jamboree in May which attracts over 1,000 visitors annually.

But the park wasn't always that way. To start with it was just a wooded hollow. Realizing the vision for the park was beyond what the tax-funded budget of Des Moines County Conservation could ever hope to achieve. So, a nonprofit called the Partners for Conservation Foundation was formed in 1986. It is now the fundraising arm to provide for conservation projects beyond what the limited local tax dollar can provide to the conservation department.

The original Partners for Conservation Foundation capital campaign team did a magnificent job raising funds for Big Hollow and the Flint River Trail. Fundraising from 2003 to 2013 fell short of the \$4 million goal, but the volunteers did raise enough to provide for the dam, swimming beach, boat ramp, RV campground and more.

Those local donations raised through the Partners for Conservation Foundation helped leverage the grants and other funding sources necessary to invest over \$2 million to make it what it is today.

The largest single project that was accomplished by this effort was the building of the 1,100 foot long, 50 foot high dam to impound the 178 acre lake. It took over seven million cubic feet of fill to make the dam, and with its standpipe and outlet structure, it stands as a great Des Moines County engineering feat. With ample rain the lake quickly filled.



Figure 2: Aerial view of Big Hollow Lake

Since then, many other small development projects have been completed at the park but none on the scale of those completed as a result of the initial capital campaign.

BIG HOLLOW DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

2002 – Preliminary environmental and cultural resource surveys began.

2003–2007 – Fundraising, grant writing, more surveys & permitting. Cultural resource surveys identified sensitive areas for which mitigation was required.

2007 – Ground was first broken for the lake dam.



Figure 3: Groundbreaking for the lake dam.

2008 – Dam completed, outlet pipe closed for first time.



Figure 4: DMCC staff at the official closing of the dam.

2009 – Lake filled. By the middle of 2009, the 178 acre lake was nearly full, having filled nearly two years faster than engineers predicted. It quickly became a destination for boaters, anglers and beach goers.



Figure 5: Big Hollow beach.

The first fish were stocked in the lake beginning in April 2009:

- April: 75,000 bluegill (1-2")
- May: 12,000 channel cat (2-3")
- June: 10,000 largemouth bass (2-3")
- September: 50,000 more bluegill (1-2")



Figure 6: First round of bluegill released into the lake.

Largely due to the growing popularity of Big Hollow, Des Moines County Conservation won the Natural Resources Tourist Hotspot award from the Iowa Tourism Office and the Travel Federation of Iowa at the 2009 Iowa Tourism Conference in November.



Figure 7: Tourism Award.

The “Official” grand opening event was held in June 2009 celebrating the completion of the new lake and concluding the original capital campaign. The large event featured land and water tours of the park and new lake.



Figure 8a, 8b, 8c: Open house reception tent (above) and lake and land tours (below).



2010 – A groundbreaking ceremony was held for the construction of the seven mile segment of the Flint River Trail that will connect to Big Hollow.



Figure 9: Groundbreaking for the Flint River Trail

Construction began on a primitive, “off-grid” cabin tucked away in a quiet clearing in the timber toward the northeast end of the park. With no running water or electricity due to its remote location, it was designed to be a rustic retreat for those wanting to camp under something more substantial than tent canvas.

In the spring of 2010, the lake was stocked with 200 adult redear sunfish and 200 adult black crappie. It was anticipated that these fish would spawn in the first year and their progeny would populate the lake very quickly.

2011 – Construction continued on the off-grid cabin. Primitive/tent campground was expanded with the addition of several new campsites; Big Hollow’s trail system was expanded and improved with the completion of the 6+ mile perimeter trail and numerous other shorter loops. Construction continued on the portion of the Flint River Trail that will connect to Big Hollow. Department staff start revising campground designs to better fit the landscape and maximize cost efficiency.

The second of three required Indiana Bat surveys was completed finding “impressive” numbers of the endangered species according to the research team.

2012 – Des Moines County Conservation celebrated its 50th anniversary. Site preparations for the RV campground began in early 2012 and actual campground construction began in June. Earthwork was completed and the campground was officially opened in August 2012. Water and electric utilities were run to the site later. The first round of trees were planted within the campground.

To save money, conservation department staff hauled all the rock (over 1,200 tons) for the campground rather than contracting it out. The layout of the campground was revised from the original engineer's design to better utilize the existing topography and minimize the amount of earthwork needed. This, among other things, allowed the campground to be constructed for less than half of the original estimated cost.



Figure 10: Ribbon cutting at grand opening of the RV campground.

The first stocking of 178 muskellunge (one per acre) took place at Big Hollow Lake. The “muskies” were all 12-15” in length.

2013 – Electric service was installed to all 32 RV campsites and a water hydrant and registration station were installed at the campground. More trees were planted and forestry work began in the area between the campground and lake. Preliminary design work began on the wastewater system needed to allow for the future construction of a RV dump station, campground bath house and full-amenity rental cabins.

Construction of the off-grid cabin was completed.

The Des Moines County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution allowing all revenue generated from Big Hollow to be held in a reserve account to be put back into the park's future maintenance and development.

The seven mile segment of the Flint River Trail from Big Hollow to Flint Bottom Road was completed and officially opened to the public.

2014 – The off-grid cabin was furnished and officially opened for rental. Despite not having running water or electricity, it booked up quickly and was rented nearly every available weekend.

Big Hollow experienced a 320% increase in camping activity over the previous fiscal year.



Figure 11: Campers enjoy the Big Hollow campground.

A traffic count at Big Hollow revealed roughly 160 vehicle trips to the park per day during the busy season. Using the results of that count, it is estimated that the park experiences over 40,000 visitors annually.

Preliminary designs were completed for the wastewater infrastructure at Big Hollow. It was determined that the estimated cost to install the infrastructure for an RV dump station and shower house alone would be over \$260,000.

A fish cleaning station was installed at the boat ramp as a service to the large number of anglers visiting the lake. More forestry management was conducted near the campground.

With amenity locations and layouts finalized and traffic patterns fully established within the park, a new Big Hollow park sign was constructed at the park's entrance.

Staff and board members began making preliminary plans for a donor recognition structure and park information center.



Figure 12: A winter sunrise over the new Big Hollow entrance sign.

2015 – A solar panel and LED lights were installed at the off-grid cabin. The cabin saw a 265% increase in rentals over the previous fiscal year. Another record number of campers stayed in Big Hollow. Market research into the RV industry indicated record number of RV owners and predictions for the industry to continue to grow.



Figure 13: The off-grid cabin at Big Hollow.

The Des Moines County Conservation and Partners for Conservation Foundation Boards began design work on the donor recognition structure as promised in the original fundraising program.

A new fundraising plan was established to put “finishing touches” on the park.

BENEFITS OF BIG HOLLOW RECREATION AREA

Today, Big Hollow is Des Moines County Conservation's most visited park with an estimated 40,000 visitors annually. It is responsible for attracting nearly half of all visitors to the county's park system. Based on findings in a study by Iowa State University, Big Hollow and Des Moines County Conservation's other main parks are major contributors to the county's \$132 million tourism industry and in making Des Moines County 13th in the state in domestic travel spending.

Big Hollow is capitalizing on the growing travel industry and bringing visitors to the area. Nearly nine million US households own RVs and surveys indicate that a full 21 percent of US households expect to purchase an RV in the future. 2014 saw the highest RV ownership of all time and the industry is expected to grow as more members of the Baby Boomer generation – the largest and fastest growing RV owner demographic – take up the activity. Furthermore, research shows that RVing is significantly less expensive than other, more “traditional” vacations. A family of four can realize a 23-59 percent savings by vacationing via RV.



Figure 14: A kid's first fish caught at Big Hollow, 2015.

RVing remains popular even despite fluctuating fuel costs. Surveys during times of rising fuel prices revealed that though 58 percent of RVers stated their travel plans would be affected by higher fuel prices, only 7 percent said it would cause them to camp less. Research shows that more than 90 percent of RVers take three or more short “mini” vacations per year. They're spending less time on the road and more time enjoying campgrounds.

But Big Hollow is more than a tourist destination. It's more than an economic development project. Big Hollow is about healthy living. It's about families. It provides recreation facilities for all ages. Whether it's splashing in the lake at the beach, catching a first fish, or viewing wildlife on the trails, there's a lot for families to do at Big Hollow.

But gone are the days where camping meant “roughing it.” Modern expectations require 50 amp service at every campsite

and reliable cell phone reception. Today's families expect flush toilets and hot showers and most certainly a trailer waste station at the campground's exit, if not at every individual site. Currently, Big Hollow offers no modern restroom facilities (only vault toilets), no showers and no dump station for campers to empty their waste tanks as they exit the park.

If Big Hollow is to stay competitive in today's outdoor recreation market, it needs to become a park that meet's today's modern amenity expectations. Therefore, this new fundraising plan will put those needed “finishing touches” on the park.

FINISHING TOUCHES

The Trustees of Partners for Conservation will partner with community leaders in this new fundraising drive to put some finishing touches on Big Hollow. Using a multi-phase approach, these volunteers will raise local funds, then use them to leverage grants to complete the following projects.

Phase I: RV Campground Improvements, 2016-2017

- Install wastewater infrastructure to service the facilities at the RV campground
- Construct an RV dump station
- Install water lines and hydrants to all 32 RV campsites
- Install wastewater lines to approximately 15 sites, making them full-hookup sites
- Construct a modern shower house/pavilion structure in the RV campground
 - The shower house design utilizes many “green” building components including solar power, geothermal ventilation and natural lighting.

Project Component	Estimated cost
Dump station & wastewater treatment facility	\$281,000.00
Wastewater infrastructure for campground shower house	\$31,000.00
Campground shower house	\$233,000.00
Water lines + hydrants to all 32 RV sites	\$10,000
Wastewater lines to 15 sites	\$25,000
Total for RV Campground Improvements	\$580,000.00

This phase is anticipated to cost approximately \$580,000, of which about \$258,000 will need to come from local donations.

2015-2017 RV Campground Development Funding Breakdown

Local fundraising	\$258,000
Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant (awarded in April 2016)	\$150,000
Park revenue	\$150,000
Des Moines County Conservation REAP Fund	\$22,000
Total	\$580,000

If fundraising goals are met by fall of 2016, the project will remain on track to proceed with construction in early 2017 and be complete before the end of the 2017 camping season.

2015-2017 RV Campground Development Timeline

Final design plans	Late summer/Early Fall 2016
Completion of the fundraising drive	October 2016
Release project for bids	October/November 2016
Select contractor	December 2016 – January 2017
Begin construction	March-April 2017
Complete project	Summer 2017



Figure 15: Engineer's rendering of the planned shower house at Big Hollow RV campground. Perspective: North side from northeast corner.



Figure 16: Engineer's rendering of the planned shower house at Big Hollow RV campground. Perspective: South side from southwest corner.

Phase II: Cabins

The goal for Phase II is to construct up to four full-amenity rental cabins. Each cabin would be tucked away in its own semi-private wooded setting.

Project Component	Estimated cost
Utilities (water, electric, sewer)	\$69,200.00
Cabin construction (Four cabins x \$75,000 each)	\$300,000.00
Total for cabins	\$369,200.00



Figure 17: An example of a rental cabin in Linn County, IA.

This phase will cost approximately \$369,000. The timeline depends on how quickly the funds can be raised. Again, local fundraising will help leverage grant dollars and more improvements to the park, such as those completed in Phase I, and will help generate more revenue for future development efforts.

Phase III and Beyond

Long term plans for Big Hollow include possible park offices/concession buildings for on-site administration and sale of concessions for park visitors as well as modern restrooms/shower facilities at or near the beach. Trail improvements and the completion of the Flint River Trail connecting Big Hollow to the city of Burlington's riverfront are also part of the long term plans for the area.

A NOTE TO PROSPECTIVE DONORS

As a donor, you are not giving; you are investing in the quality of life for Des Moines County residents, visitors and future generations. Again, at Big Hollow, there is activity for all.

There is no limit to the size of donations. No contribution is too small. However, one should consult their tax advisor or estate planner when giving the larger gift. Partners for Conservation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, so your gift will be tax deductible according to the law. The Foundation has a trust to handle donated funds properly.

A pledge sheet is included at the end of this presentation. Those who want to spread their investment (their gift) over a multi-year period may do so. In Partners' last fundraising program, 99% of pledges were paid. But, if circumstances prevent, then not honoring your pledge is acceptable, but let Partners know—they will understand and can plan accordingly.

Donor Recognition

If you donated \$1,000 or more to the initial Big Hollow Capital Campaign, you have already secured your spot on the planned donor recognition structure. It will be located near the entrance to Big Hollow, at the north end of the median in the boat ramp parking lot. It will accompany a planned park information center and flagpole. The size of donation will be reflected in the size of tile on the structure.



Figure 18: Rendering of the donor wall, flagpole and park information kiosk at Big Hollow. The donor names will face the information kiosk. A walkway will arc between the two structures.

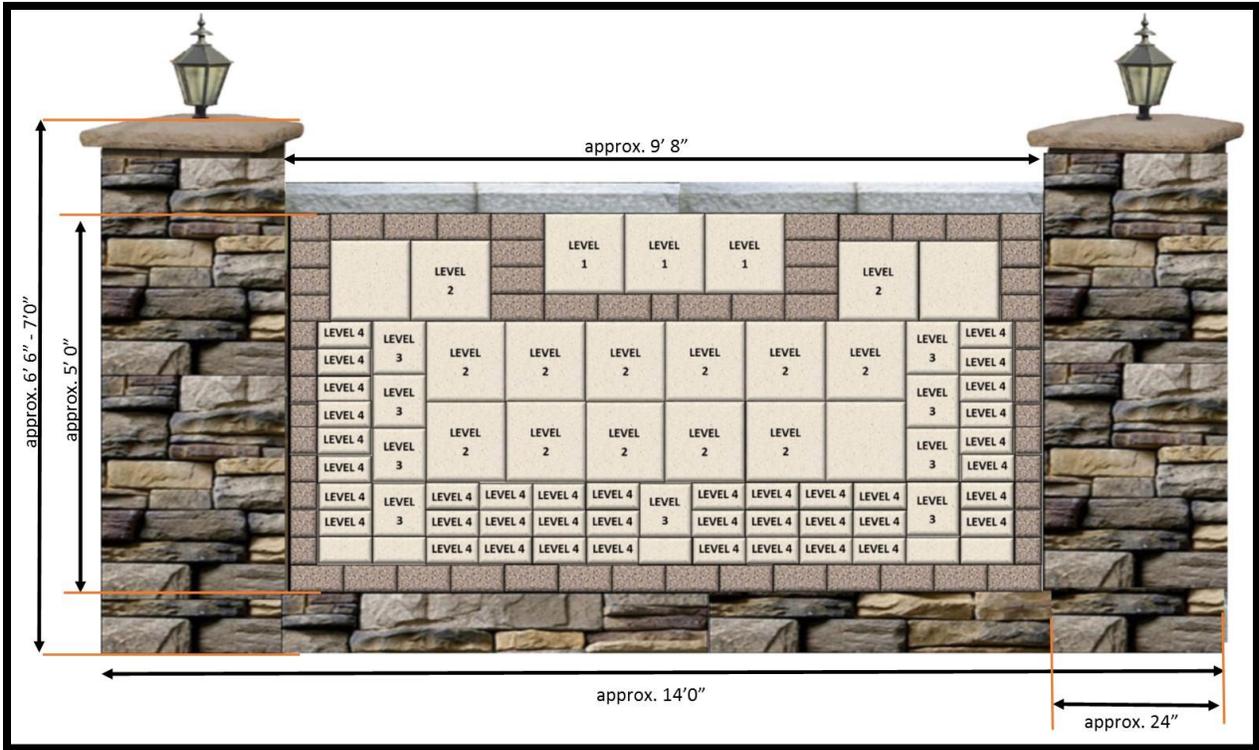


Figure 19: Big Hollow donor wall design with approximate dimensions. Donor levels reflect the size of donation made during the initial fundraising campaign.



Figure 20: The park information kiosk will be designed similar to this one.

Donations received during this fundraising campaign will be **recognized on engraved bricks** that will be installed on the walkway that passes between the donor wall and park information center. A **donor recognition panel** will also be installed in the information kiosk recognizing the donors and their contribution levels.



Figure 21: An example of engraved walkway bricks at the Mediapolis, IA school's outdoor classroom.



Figure 22: An example of how donors will also be recognized by contribution level on panels in the park information kiosk.

CONCLUSION

The Board of Trustees of Partners for Conservation all serve as volunteers. They will spearhead the current fundraising project. They are giving of their time and talents to see this fundraising drive to completion.

They may know nothing of your estate or your ability to give. All they can do is ask and that is their volunteer mission. They will spend many hours on this project. But, it is between you and the volunteer that the 2016 fundraising goal will be met. All donations should be made out to Partners for Conservation. Partners will keep the funds in trust until they are needed. A donor list will be maintained and a letter of progress will let you know how and when your donation will be used.

2016 Partners for Conservation Foundation Board Members

David Wiemer	(319) 754-8288	David Riley	(319) 758-6828
Dan Wiedemeier	(319) 753-5824	Willie Peugh	(319) 750-4444
Jim Garnjobst	(319) 758-9160	Jim Steer	(319) 759-3837
Dick Keith	(319) 752-0010		

We hope this document will assist in your decision to help improve the quality of life in Des Moines County for visitors, citizens and future generations.

Thank you for your investment.

Pledge Form

PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION FOUNDATION



Supporting conservation efforts in Des Moines County in order to improve the quality of life for visitors, citizens, and future generations.

Donor Information (please print or type)

NAME _____

BILLING ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE ZIP CODE _____

PHONE 1 | PHONE 2 _____

FAX | EMAIL _____

Pledge Information

I (we) pledge a total of \$_____ to be paid:

now (payment included)

monthly: \$_____ each month for _____ months

quarterly (_____ # of years) yearly (_____ # of years)

I (we) plan to make this contribution in the form of: cash check other

Name as you want it to appear on the engraved brick/paver (max. 3 lines; 14 characters/line):

I (we) wish to have our gift remain anonymous.

Signature(s)

Date

Please make checks, corporate matches, or other gifts payable to:

Partners for Conservation Foundation
PO Box 714
Burlington, IA 52601
(319) 753-8260