

VISION STATEMENT:
How the Indian Creek Nature Center shall
“provide leadership in land protection and restoration.”
October 9, 2005

To provide leadership in land protection and restoration, ICNC staff and board should be well educated and passionate about the value of both. They will promote care for the environment at every opportunity. What follows is a detailed outline of some of the primary ways in which this shall be done.

TO IMPLEMENT THIS DOCUMENT

Staffing will need to be expanded to implement many of the key aspects of this document. *Growth needs to be sustainable; long-term funding for any action needs to be considered.*

*indicates an item will take significant staff time.

-indicates an item will take some additional staff time.

I. Lead by example

Proposal: By setting a good example, the Nature Center will advance the Objectives set forth in Roman Numerals II-VI.

Resolution: The Board and staff should think creatively and regularly about how the Nature Center can advance these other objectives through leading by example.

Proposal: Educate board members regarding how and why to protect and preserve natural ecosystems and open space on their land (II), about how and why to restore and maintain natural ecosystems (III), ongoing collaborative efforts (IV), ongoing land protection strategies (V), and relevant community issues and actions (VI).

Resolution: Periodically at board meetings relevant workshops will be held focusing on objectives II-VI. Staff will coordinate workshops for board meetings, and periodically report on new developments and the status of objectives.

Proposal: Staff will increase their attendance at relevant educational events for professionals, and shall prepare appropriate reports for the Board regarding what was learned and ideas for programming and mission-related activities developed as a result of attending such events.

Resolution: Staff will increase their professional development, coordinate annual board workshops on restoration and preservation, and incorporate what is learned into programs and mission-related activities.

Proposal: Marketing ICNC as a place that promotes protection and restoration of land.

-Resolution: Media efforts will be better organized, with key mainstream dates, such as Earth Day and Arbor Day events, incorporated into strategies. Presentations will continue to be given to community groups, and new potential groups will be identified. Potential avenues for regular releases of information will be explored by the marketing committee.

Proposal: Restore and maintain managed land to an ecologically healthy state.

Resolution: With current resources, the Nature Center is “holding its own” and increasing restored areas in small increments. As more invasive exotics become prevalent, and as our land base expands, additional resources will be needed.

Proposal: Preserve healthy ecosystems.

Resolution: ICNC will continue to preserve and improve the health of its ecosystems, and encourage others to do the same.

Proposal: Publicize restored areas that belong to ICNC, detailing what has been done.

Resolution: “Indian Creek Nature Center restoration area” signs placed on Otis and Bertram Roads when entering property area. Formally mark boundaries of all managed lands by small “ICNC” signs. Staff will do a better job of keeping current signs/marquees updated and in good repair. Marketing committee will conceptualize signs and markers, identify artist/company to create them, and work with the director to find funding to construct and place them.

Proposal: Conserve resources and recycle/reuse.

Resolution: Budget will be expanded to incorporate the additional up-front cost of green products, donations will be sought for ecologically appropriate items, and staff will actively pursue using green products, as defined by recently developed procedure. Recycle bins will be prominently displayed next to public area trash cans. When appropriate, educational materials will be displayed explaining green/wise resource use. Board will expand budget to incorporate funding for green products. More resources and effort will be devoted to create publicity related to these efforts. Board members will share knowledge of good resources for green products, and assist staff in making key contacts to get products donated.

II. Educate and assist land owners regarding how and why to protect and preserve natural ecosystems and open space on their land.

Proposal: Educate and work with landowners on: legal protection options (and benefits); provide contacts with appropriate organizations/government agencies, and encourage the donation of easements to appropriate organizations.

***Resolution:** Develop periodic communications, including workshops, articles, interviews, and brochures. Develop relationships with professionals in the field to network with landowners. Appropriate staff will develop stronger relationships/more regular communication with neighboring landowners and Bena Brook landowners, explain our mission to them, and ask their help in protecting the Bena Brook watershed. The Nature Center will stay informed about, and help publicize, options landowners have to protect their property.

Proposal: Train ICNC staff on land acquisition, land easements, and land management.

***Resolution:** Periodic in-service seminars will educate all staff on the basic aspects of land protection. A staff member will have in-depth knowledge to share with the community, and will maintain good relationships with relevant attorneys and organizations, and make referrals as appropriate. Key personnel will stay current and active in the field of land protection and restoration. The Land Steward will be trained in INHF monitoring techniques. Monitoring local

easements for INHF could be a self-supporting program and could also strengthen our presence in the community.

Proposal: Participate with display booths at related exhibitions.

-Resolution: Staff will identify and prioritize appropriate functions, develop displays, and attend priority functions. Land protection material will be included where appropriate in displays.

III. Educate and assist land owners regarding how and why to restore and maintain natural ecosystems.

Proposal: Encourage and educate landowners regarding how and why they should restore, create, and improve appropriate diverse ecological communities on their land, including prairies, savannas, wetlands and woodlands.

-Resolution: The Nature Center will expand its programming to serve landowners wishing to restore/recreate healthy ecosystems on their property. The programs will be marketed both individually and as a series.

Proposal: Facilitate relationships between landowners and appropriate restorationists, and encourage and educate landowners regarding how and why they should consider restoring, improving, or creating diverse ecological communities on their land (including prairie, savannah, wetlands, woodlands, and other diverse communities).

Resolution: ICNC staff will continue to answer basic questions and serve as a resource for landowners.

Proposal: Protect water quality and educate people about the value of water quality and watersheds.

***Resolution:** ICNC board will resolve to advocate for the responsible care of watersheds, focusing locally on Indian Creek and Bena Brook. Protecting watersheds means no development in the floodplain, removing contaminants/preventing contaminants as feasible, and no further degradation of the watersheds. This is achievable through no-runoff development. Staff and board will encourage neighbors in the watersheds to make the same commitment. Restoration would be desirable when possible. There is potential grant money available for the Bena Brook watershed, and it has a high degree of restoration potential. The board will publicly state that ICNC values watersheds and wants to see them cared for. "No development should take place in the floodplain. All development should be of no-runoff design." The board will encourage landowners to voluntarily comply. ICNC will provide support and information about how to achieve this and support/spearhead related initiatives. Board and staff will make contact with major landholders in the Indian Creek Watershed, and encourage them to be proactive to protect the ecological health within the area. The Land Steward and Director will work with Bena Brook landowners and pursue grant money for restoration efforts.

Proposal: Educate and offer Technical Assistance to Builders and Developers; promote smart growth.

***Resolution:** ICNC will be a resource for both homeowners and builders. ICNC will develop a relationship with FAIR. ICNC will work to educate developers by supporting other initiatives and through publications, meetings and workshops about the value and “how to” of smart development. ICNC will refer interested developers to experienced technical people. ICNC will educate the public about the possibilities of green development, and refer individuals to appropriate builders.

IV. Leverage our resources, voice and influence through collaborations.

Proposal: Become affiliated with other land protection/restoration organizations to become a larger voice.

Resolution: We will maintain memberships in the Society of Ecological Restoration, and maintain and strengthen our relationships with other appropriate organizations, including but not limited to INHF, FAIR, Trees Forever, Linn County, and 1,000 Friends of Iowa. We will join the Land Trust Alliance, Iowa Native Plant Society, and Iowa Prairie Network and will consider the value of other memberships or relationships as appropriate.

Proposal: Work collaboratively with government and other conservation agencies to promote all aspects of our mission, and protect green space.

-Resolution: Appropriate ICNC staff, volunteers or board members will hold periodic meetings with those involved with other nature/environmental education organizations to discuss the ecological health of the region, good strategies to collaborate and pool resources, and ways to focus group efforts. Staff will maintain good working relationships with such organizations.

Proposal: Collaborate with groups for on-site restoration activities.

Resolution: Continue to maintain good working relationships.

V. Promote land protection and restoration and ICNC’s other mission objectives by accepting planned gifts of land and by purchasing properties that strategically expand the land base owned, managed or protected by ICNC in a manner that advances one or more of the objectives set forth in the ICNC Mission Statement.

Proposal: Enlarge ICNC’s land base

ICNC’s land holdings have been gradually increasing in size, due to gifts and strategic acquisitions. Land has direct value to the Nature Center’s Mission as a place for people to interact with nature, as protected wild places, and as a place for education. In some cases, the Nature Center’s mission may be better served to have another agency or landowner protect/own/manage the property.

***Resolution:** Over time, the Nature Center will consider the acquisition of land that furthers the mission. The Nature Center will identify land that may further it’s mission based on priorities developed by the Advocacy and Conservancy Committee and the Executive Committee. Any property will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with ICNC’s policy. Advocacy and Conservancy will make a recommendation to the board concerning available properties. Board and staff will prioritize working with landowners in the Bena Brook watershed

and elsewhere to legally protect their property. Protecting appropriate land by owning it leads by example, protects our rapidly diminishing “wilds” and holds the land in trust for future generations of both wildlife and people. Without the land, our future as a civilization and as an organization is bleak. Establish a revolving land purchase fund for down payment on critical land as needed. Discuss with landowner neighbors the value of future acquisition and protection of their land.

VI. Educate (and advocate before) community decision makers.

Proposal: Identify key risks facing healthy ecosystems, and develop a structured effort to gain support for healthy, protected ecosystems.

Resolution: Identify key risks and possible solutions; those that are not addressed by other aspects of this document may be attached in an addendum. Indian Creek Nature Center will coordinate a more comprehensive and organized effort to advance this goal, and will develop strong and mutually advantageous relationships with key decision makers. The Nature Center hopes to make certain, through non-confrontational and broad, community-wide efforts, that when decisions are made regarding development and city planning, the ecological, public health, and aesthetic benefits of green space are given appropriate weight and consideration.

Proposal: Work with governing bodies to develop, maintain and enforce wise land stewardship regulations (open space, lighting, landscape, infill and smart growth).

-Resolution: Identify and, when appropriate, support other organizations working toward positive ecological health issues (FAIR, CR Astronomers, etc). If critical issues are not being championed, consider the relative value, expense, and possibilities of supporting an issue, keeping in mind how it relates to the mission.

Proposal: Be a resource for area governments and agencies.

Resolution: By fostering strong working relationships with key decision-makers, the Nature Center will become the “go -to” organization for area governments and agencies needing assistance regarding ecological issues.

Proposal: Encourage CR Parks Department to declare its appropriate “natural areas” as protected natural areas.

Resolution: Attempted in 2005. Map made of “natural areas,” but no long -term protection achieved.