



**2011 Annual
Report**

New Beginnings

River Action strives to foster the environmental, economic, and cultural vitality of the Mississippi River and its riverfront in the Quad City region.

A Message From Mik Holgersson, River Action Program Director of Natural Resources

According to The Center for City Park Excellence, the typical park within America's 50 largest cities is 5 acres in size. Like the fateful palm stand in a sprawling desert, these green oases offer precious opportunities for rest and recreation within our modern urban world. And while we prize our parks for many reasons, we aren't the only ones who flock to these "all-man's-lands." Parks are often the only remnant refuges for displaced native wildlife in an otherwise developed landscape. And, while all parks are not created equal, their collective role in broader nature conservation efforts is resoundingly important.

The Quad Cities is home to many parks rich in nature. On a larger scale, this Midwestern metropolis is centrally located within an hour's drive of dozens of municipal, county and state parks, wildlife areas, and preserves. Together, these publicly accessible lands protect over 17,000 acres of contrasting habitat types that are home to an exceptional diversity of flora and fauna. This robust collection of nature is not by chance. And, in fact, it is a product of the very thing that has always been recognized as the shared resource tying the Quad Cities' communities together: the Mississippi River. The Mississippi and its tributaries have carved a dynamic landscape through the Quad Cities' region, causing the expansive tallgrass prairie to give way to a multitude of transitioning habitats from wooded bluffs, to vast floodplain wetlands, to the muddy waters of the river itself. The Mississippi River is also central to the Mississippi Flyway, the longest migration route of birds in the Western Hemisphere.

Thus, by no small measure, the Quad Cities abounds in wildlife and wild places. Even so, I've observed that this fact largely escapes notice. You might say that these natural resources have been hiding in plain site. QC Wild Places is about to change all that. In a culture that has largely replaced hiking with strolling the mall and family picnics with Facebook chats, it's high time to rekindle the wonder and adventure associated with exploring the wilder side of our region. QC Wild Places is tapping into our Web-centric culture (and yes, will even utilize Facebook) to create QCWildPlaces.com, a website that will showcase all of the publicly accessible wild places in the five counties of Muscatine and Scott in Iowa, and Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry in Illinois. Each nature hotspot is within one hour's driving time of the Quad City metro area and features free admission (an agreeable price point in a slow economy).

QC Wild Places is encouraging families in particular to get out and explore nature. An incentive program called the QC Wild Places Explorers is tailored to kids thirteen and under who visit multiple wild places during the course of a year. A visit to three different wild places, each documented with a photo of the participant near a recognizable site feature, will earn a QC Wild Places ball cap. Additional prizes will be awarded for visiting more sites, and a digital passport is in the works so that kids can keep track of their adventures.

New Beginnings *Continued*

While the website and children's program has kicked off QC Wild Places, the larger vision hopes to fill an even taller order. In partnership with public and private land managers, conservation groups, corporate supporters, tourism bureaus, and community leaders, QC Wild Places will do more than serve as an information resource and outreach program – it will actively promote and support these natural areas, financially and otherwise, in order to better connect people to these resources and cultivate a culture of stewardship. This effort will include assembling a coalition of experts to develop a comprehensive plan to coordinate conservation efforts that will promote ecological corridor development throughout the five-county region. One need not look further than the exceptionally successful Chicago Wilderness (see www.chicagowilderness.org) to see what can be accomplished when individual conservation efforts are considered in a regional context.

Ultimately, whether visitor or Quad Cities native, QC Wild Places hopes you will use QCWildPlaces.com to discover, or rediscover, the natural roots of the area and surrounding region. Then, just maybe, you'll consider joining QC Wild Places in its mission to protect these natural resources for future generations. As a friendly word of caution, you might soon discover that the Quad Cities is a bit wilder than you remembered.

Kids Summer Camps and Wild Explorers

The QC Wild Places Explorers program is open to youths age 13 and younger as an incentive to get outside and explore natural areas around the region. Participants can fill out a form on the website and upload photos of them with identifiable land marks from QC Wild Places. By visiting three or more Wild Places, the young explorers are given a QC Wild Places hat and a certificate of participation.

QC Wild Places is working with several community summer camps to get kids outside and to help them experience natural areas around the Quad City Region. The Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Rock Island and three Scott County YMCA camps have confirmed that they will work with QC Wild Places to encourage outdoor recreation and education at our natural areas. Other summer camp partnerships are in the works.



Restoring and improving signage, access, and trails in 2011

In 2011 QC Wild Places pledged \$50,041 for the following site improvements:

- ***Horseshoe Bend Interpretive Signs at Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge \$2,000***
This project will place professionally designed and printed interpretive signs on kiosks at Horseshoe Bend Division of Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge. The displays have maps, photos, and information about the refuge that focus on an aspect of providing habitat for migratory birds. Total Budget: \$5,600
- ***Trail Signage at Loud Thunder Forest Preserve \$3,000***
Information kiosks will give users a better experience by providing them with park information such as pamphlets with park maps and highlights to view along the trails. Trail signage will improve user experience by reassuring them that they are traveling on the correct path as well as providing them with information at trailheads. Total Budget: \$6,000
- ***Bridge Construction at Black Hawk State Historic Site \$6,000***
A new bridge will be constructed to replace a crossing at a major slump along the lower Rock River trail that was washed out in 2011. Total Budget: \$11,000
- ***Trail Identification System at Illiniwek Forest Preserve \$6,000***
Three kiosks will be installed in areas adjacent to where users will park vehicles and access trails. The kiosks will have 24"x20" trail signs secured to them along with trail and park rules, in addition to any other pertinent information. Two flip-down signs will notify users when the trails have been closed due to a large amount of precipitation. Total Budget: \$12,000
- ***Outdoor Aquatic Experience Facility at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center \$6,591***
A teaching/observation deck will be constructed on the edge of the water to serve as an outdoor classroom. Ramps and floating docks will also be installed. This improved public access to the restored pond will enhance visitor experiences in offering on-site opportunities by giving all a safer place to launch canoes and kayaks, providing a platform out on the water for all types of aquatic studies and observations, and will accommodate those with varying abilities including students of all ages as well as the general public. Total Budget: \$35,000
- ***Sand Prairie and Turtle Nest Site Restoration and Viewing Platform at Nahant Marsh Education Center \$8,950***
Invasive and woody vegetation will be removed from a critical nesting area for turtles, and the area will be re-seeded with a native sand prairie mix. A raised boardwalk/viewing platform will be built to avoid disturbing turtle nests and create a "transitional" trail between the sand prairie area and the lower sedge meadow area. Total Budget: \$14,975
- ***Shoreline Fishing and Hiking Trail at Lost Grove Lake and Wildlife Management Area \$21,500***
A 2,000 foot limestone chip, ADA accessible fishing and hiking trail will be installed along the shoreline of Lost Grove Lake. This area will be one of the most utilized sections of Lost Grove Lake with amenities such as a boat ramp and slip, a parallel ADA accessible fishing structure, shoreline armor and fish habitat. Total Budget: \$25,200
- ***Jubilee Trail Extension at Sunderbruch Park \$5,000***
The Jubilee Bike/Hike trail will be extended at Sunderbruch park. Six bridges will be built to cross steep ravines and ditches. This will add an estimated 1.5 miles of multi-use trail. Total Budget: \$7,000

Reaching Out

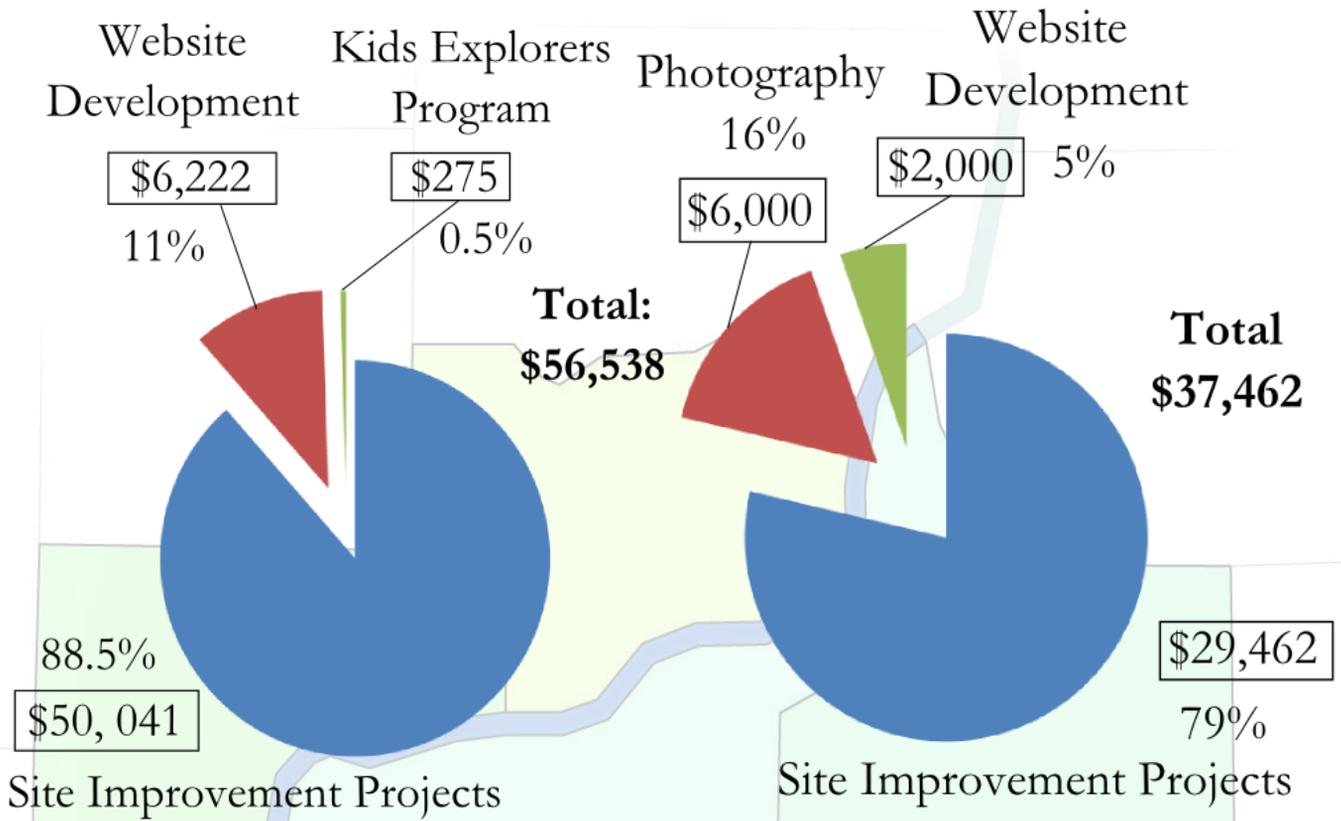
- **Website** – An easy to use website, www.QCWildPlaces.com, provides the community with easy-to-access information about the program and natural sites.
- **Facebook** – A QC Wild Places page on Facebook.com provides interested individuals with an enhanced connection to information about QC Wild Places through social networking. People can post feedback, pictures, etc. on the Facebook wall.
- **Brochures in progress** – An informative brochure will provide a map of QC Wild Places natural areas and information about the program.

Measuring Progress

- Projects will begin in spring 2012. Completions are expected in early September 2012.
- Explorer program participants will be counted. Six explorers completed the program in October, 2011.
- Participants will log onto Facebook page and share experiences.
- Visitors to www.QCWildPlaces.com will be counted.

2011 Funding Report

2012 Proposed Funding



QC Wild Places Funders

Scott County Regional Authority	\$ 15,000
Day Foundation	\$ 5,000
Rauch Family Foundation	\$ 1,000
River Partnership of Community Foundations	\$ 23,000
Community Foundation of the Great River Bend	\$ 3,000
McKnight Foundation	\$ 15,000
River Action	\$ 17,000
Iowa American Water Grant	\$ 1,000
Funds needing to be raised	\$ 14,000
Total	\$ 94,000

QC Wild Places and Site Managers

1. Credit Island Park	City of Davenport
2. Duck Creek Parkway	City of Davenport
3. Sunderbruch Park (Southwest Park)	City of Davenport
4. Nahant Marsh	City of Davenport and Nahant Marsh
5. Greenvalley Park and Nature Preserve	City of Moline
6. Sylvan Island	City of Moline
7. Elton E. Fawks Bald Eagle Refuge Nature Preserve	Illinois DNR
8. Cedar Bottoms Wildlife Area	Iowa DNR
9. Lost Grove Lake	Iowa DNR
10. Red Cedar Wildlife Area	Iowa DNR
11. Wiese Slough Wildlife Management Area	Iowa DNR
12. Munson Township Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve	Munson Township
13. Cedar Bluffs Recreation Park	Muscatine County
14. Discovery Park	Muscatine County
15. Pike Run Wildlife Area	Muscatine County
16. Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area	Muscatine County
17. Shield Prairie	Muscatine County
18. Jack Shugar Memorial Park	Muscatine County Conservation Board
19. McKeown Bridge River Access	Muscatine County Conservation Board
20. Nye Cemetery	Muscatine County Conservation Board
21. Richardson Wildlife Area	Muscatine County Conservation Board
22. Dorrance Park	Rock Island County
23. Illiniwek Forest Preserve	Rock Island County
24. Indian Bluff Forest Preserve	Rock Island County
25. Loud Thunder Forest Preserve	Rock Island County
26. Niabi Zoo and Niabi Zoo Forest Preserve	Rock Island County
27. Ralph Martin Forest Preserve	Rock Island County
28. Schuetzen Park Historic Site	Schuetzenpark Guild
29. Wapsi River Environmental Education Center	Scott County
30. West Lake Park	Scott County
31. Black Hawk State Historic Site and Forest Nature Preserve	State of Illinois
32. Hennepin Canal Parkway State Park	State of Illinois
33. Andalusia Slough Recreation Area	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
34. Fisherman's Corner	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
35. Lock and Dam 14 Recreation Area / Smith's Island	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
36. Shady Creek Recreation Area	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
37. Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge	U.S. Fish and Wildlife
38. Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge (Keithsburg Division)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife
39. Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge	U.S. Fish and Wildlife

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