



## **Area Plan 2007-2012**

**Pathfinders Resource, Conservation and Development (RC&D)  
Area Plan 2007-2012**

**Values**

Natural resource conservation and protection, entrepreneurship, prospering communities, recreational opportunities.

**Vision**

Healthy land, prosperous communities.

**Mission**

To be a spark plug for local area economic development, natural resource conservation and recreational projects in our six county area.

**Audiences**

Businesses, residents, landowners (both men and women), recreational landowners, farmers, local governments, and other non-profits.

**Needs and Opportunities**

**Economic development**

Economic development continues to be a high priority for our six-county area. There continues to be a lack of high paying jobs to attract younger families to the area. An area that can be developed is to work with youth to develop the entrepreneurial spirit. The revolving loan program continues to be under utilized and under advertised.

Conventional agriculture remains a challenge for young farmers to get started in. There are emerging opportunities for farmers to look at niche markets and there is a trend of consumers requesting locally grown products (even surpassing the demand for organic produce in some areas.) The expanding group of Amish farmers presents new opportunities for local food production.

Renewable energy is another trend nationwide and in Iowa. There is an explosion of corn-based ethanol plants across the state, but there are also opportunities using switchgrass as a bio-fuel and expanding the use of wind power. Pathfinders had an area wind study completed in 2005 which could be further utilized. We also have landfills that may be suitable for methane production.

Tourism continues to be a strong player in this area, especially in Van Buren County. There could more of a focus on regional tourism to encompass larger areas and try to entice visitors to spend more time and more money in SE Iowa. Specific tourist sites in the area include Belva Deer Recreation Area in Keokuk County, American Gothic Visitor Center in Wapello County, Iowa Forest Heritage Center in Van Buren County and Maasdam Barns in Jefferson County.

**Natural resource conservation**

There continues to be high demand for forestry services. The Total Forestry Program can continue to fill that need by providing services for tree planting, timber stand improvement and timber sale coordination. We have an opportunity to expand the educational focus by hosting forestry field days targeting adults across the area. The need for youth education relating to natural resources is typically filled by county naturalists, although Pathfinders can certainly assist and collaborate with efforts. Other potential education partnerships include working with FFAs or 4H members.

Water quality continues to be an issue. The Fox River is a high priority project in Davis and Van Buren Counties. Buckeye Creek is a local priority watershed in Wapello County. Mahaksa County is one of two counties in Iowa that contains 80% of the unreclaimed abandoned coal mines in the state. Pathfinders can partner with SWCDs to access funds to reclaim abandoned mine sites and reduce acid runoff.

The Tracht Farm is a resource that needs a plan and purpose. It can be utilized for field days or for educational field trips for youth.

**Recreational opportunities**

Developing recreational opportunities in communities will enhance the quality of life for its citizens as well as attract new residents to the area. Bike trail development continues to be an interest in all counties served. As trails are developed there needs to be coordination to link to other trails in the area.

Other recreational needs can be filled through the development of lakes, similar to that at Belva Deer Recreational Area. Smaller improvements to communities may include the development of playgrounds for youth.

**Goal I: Promote Economic Development in Our Six-County Area**

**Objective 1:** Identify, facilitate & promote two renewable energy opportunities by 2012.

**Strategy 1:** Research and develop a program to identify switch grass growers that will participate in building a local renewable energy program:

Action Plan: Facilitate community discussions

Action Plan: Plant 2000 acres of switch grass over 5 years.

**Strategy 2:** Create at least two different educational materials to promote renewable wind energy opportunities.

Action Plan: Identify ways to work with the Iowa Energy Center and utility companies.

Action Plan: Develop a brochure for landowners

Action Plan: Develop a brochure for businesses and local government entities

**Strategy 3:** Hold a conference in 2012 around renewable energy opportunities

Action Plan: Develop partnerships to plan and execute the conference

**Objective 2:** Support the establishment of at least five new value added agriculture enterprises by 2012.

**Strategy 1:** Develop and promote local specialty products and value-added markets: i.e.: wine, furniture craftsmanship, etc.

Action Plan: Increase the capacity of Fairfield Buy Fresh Buy Local (BFBL) by assisting them with organizational development and fundraising

Action Plan: Map an on-farm specialty products and value-added agricultural businesses within the six county areas in 2007.

Action Plan: Assist in developing farmers markets and specialty markets.

Action Plan: Promote and distribute resources from the Rural Business Enterprise Revolving Loan Fund.

**Objective 3:** Develop three new tourist destinations in the six-county area by 2012.

**Strategy 1:** Partner with the Masdaam Barns preservation committee to develop an education and tourist information center at a historic farmstead.

Action Plan: Provide grant identification and grant writing assistance for the development of the Masdaam Barns in Jefferson County.

**Strategy 2:** Partner with the Iowa Forest Heritage Center committee to develop a state-of-the-art visitor and education center focusing on Iowa's Forest Resources.

Action Plan: Provide grant identification and grant writing assistance for the development of the Iowa Forest Heritage Center in Van Buren County.

**Objective 4:** Develop two young entrepreneurial programs in the six-county area by 2012.

**Strategy 1:** Partner with the Fairfield Entrepreneurial Association (FEA) to development a program in one Jefferson County School.

- Action Plan: Develop a relationship with the FEA and work with school teachers to develop a pilot project.
- Action Plan: After the development of the initial pilot project, begin a second project in another county.

**Objective 5:** Assist three communities with development/improvement of facilities for economic development by 2012.

**Strategy:** Assist cities by administering Community Development Block Grants for facilities tied to economic development.

- Action Plan: Employ a grant administrator to oversee CDBG grant administration for communities in the Pathfinders area.

**Objective 6:** Help facilitate meetings to promote economic development in at least two counties by 2012.

**Strategy:** Serve on planning teams for Women in Agriculture or Women, Land and Legacy gatherings.

- Action Plan: Assist in Van Buren, Wapello or Jefferson Counties.

<b>Goal II: Protect and Conserve Natural Resources in Our Six-County Area</b>
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**Objective 1:** Build a full-service forestry program by adding a dynamic education component over the next 5 years.

**Strategy 1:** Develop educational program focused around the region and at the demonstration farm.

- Action Plan: Develop a planning group in each county to plan and host a forestry-related education program in each location
- Action Plan: Partner with the respective County Conservation Boards in developing planning/education programs
- Action Plan: Partner with ISU Extension regarding their completed studies and programs

**Strategy 2:** Build on current forestry project by planting 600 acres of trees over 5 years.

- Action Plan: Promote riparian buffers and tree planting to landowners through the development of a website and field days.

**Objective 2:** Improve water quality in three watersheds in the next five years.

**Strategy 1:** Partner with Mahaska SWCD to reclaim abandoned coal mines in the Muchakinock Watershed.

- Action Plan: Apply for and administer Clean Streams grant funds through the Office of Surface Mining.

**Strategy 2:** Partner with Wapello SWCD to apply conservation practices in the Buckeye Creek and Kettle Creek Watersheds.

- Action Plan: Assist with grant writing to acquire Watershed Protection Funds and Watershed Improvement Review Board funds for conservation practices.

**Strategy 3:** Partner with Davis SWCD to plan Fox Lake Project.

- Action Plan: Assist with project organization and coordination and grant writing to fund the project.

**Goal III: Develop Recreational Opportunities in Our Six-County Area**

**Objective 1:** Develop three new trails within in the six-county area by 2012.

**Strategy 1:** Partner with local trail groups to initiate planning and access funds for trail development.

Action Plan: Partner with Keokuk County trails group to develop a trail from Belva Deer Recreation Area to Sigourney.

Action Plan: Partner with Wapello County trails group to develop a trail from Eldon to Ottumwa.

Action Plan: Partner with Jefferson County Trails Association to complete the development of the Jefferson County Trails Plan and implement the Safe Routes to School program.

Action Plan: Partner with Regional Planning Area 15 on trail planning.

**Objective 2:** Develop or improve at least one youth playground recreation service by 2012.

**Strategy 1:** Partner with local community groups to assist with planning and fundraising activities.

Action Plan: Partner with Libertyville Playground.

**Goal IV: Create an Internal Management/Administrative system that helps us meet our future goals.**

**Objective 1:** Review internal systems and identify new technology systems that can help Pathfinders become more efficient by the end of 2007.

**Strategy 1:** Develop policies and standards for services rendered to other not-for-profits such as grant writing.

Action Plan: Review polices and procedures and compare with systems used by other non-profit organizations.

**Objective 2:** Develop a 5-year marketing/communication plan.

The Pathfinders RC&D Council agrees that the RC&D Program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A and B) that provide that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial (or technical) assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.

The Pathfinders RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with Federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for nonprocurement, suspension, and debarment, and State review.

The Pathfinders RC&D Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to use effectively the assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein.

Pathfinders RC&D Council, Iowa

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ Council Secretary

This action authorized at an official meeting of the Pathfinders RC&D Council on April 11, 2007.  
U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service

The State Conservationist hereby acknowledges the attached Area Plan of Pathfinders RC&D as meeting the requirements under Public Law 97-98 to receive assistance from USDA.

Acknowledged By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ State Conservationist