

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

# Strategic Plan 2015-2019

This strategic plan builds on the strengths, credibility and respect Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has fostered to:

- Accelerate the conservation of Iowa's land, water and wildlife resources
- Improve the health of Iowa's dwindling prairie, oak savanna and other native ecosystems
- Expand the community of partners and supporters who take action for Iowa nature



## Iowa is our home.

Iowans desire and need healthy land, clean water, abundant wildlife and revitalizing outdoor experiences in nature. These are essential to life, not luxury items—for Iowans today and for many generations to come.

### We serve...

**Nature** in all its beauty and diversity, all across Iowa. Nature has no voice, so we must speak and act on its behalf.

**Future Iowans** who depend on us to act now to restore Iowa's land and waters to good health. The special places we permanently protect together, plus a strong land ethic, represent our legacy.

**Those who want to take action** for a more natural Iowa. We serve landowners who want to protect their land. We make it easier for donors and volunteers to support great places and see results. We assist community leaders and agencies who create or expand trails, parks and wildlife areas. We work to bring these true leaders together for the benefit of all.

### We embrace...

**The power of relationship** with donors, volunteers, landowners, conservation agencies and other partners.

**The responsibility of leadership** to bring people together to generate positive solutions for Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

**The bedrock of respect** for the land, for our conservation partners, for our members who generously entrust their gifts and goals to us.

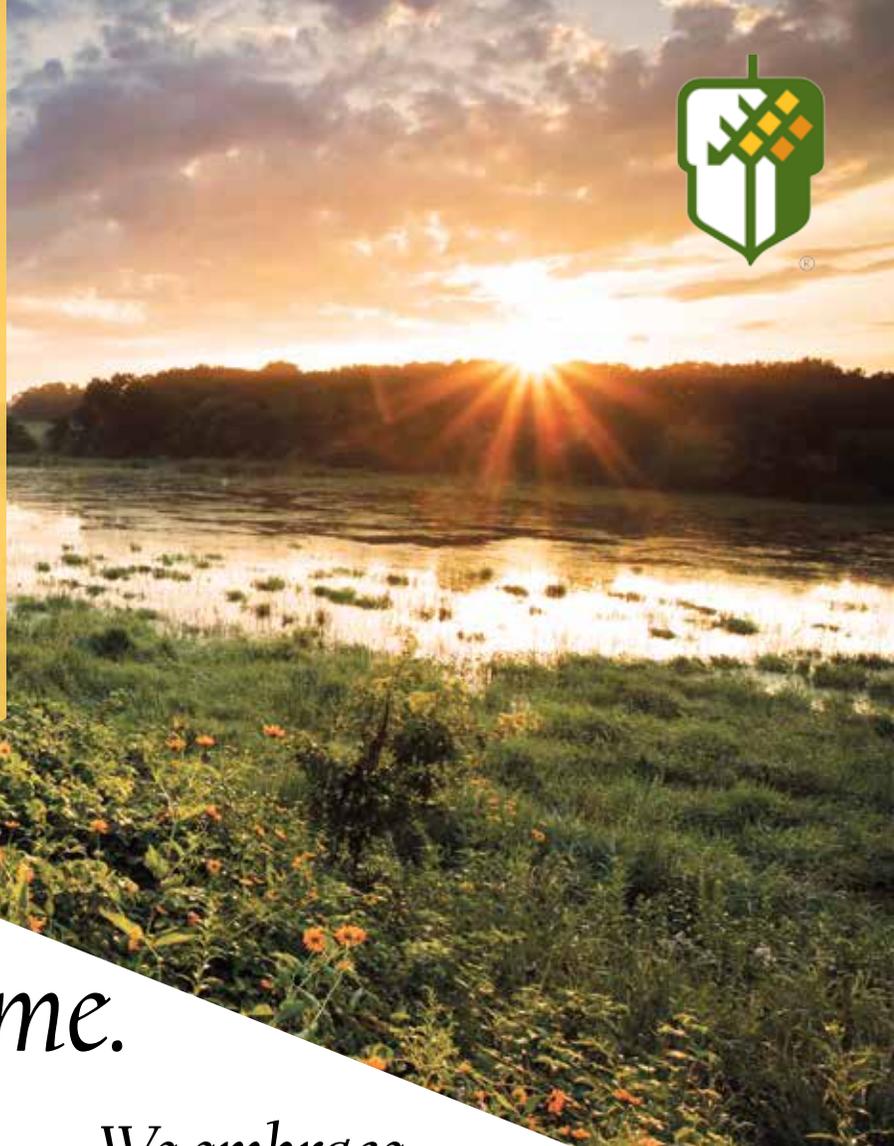
**The need for concrete results** in acres of land permanently protected, miles of trails created, scores of interns meaningfully engaged, thousands of members enlisted in the crucial conservation work at hand.

### We commit to...

**Provide the energy and drive** to accelerate conservation in Iowa.

**Maintain our passion**, dedication and hard work.

**Share great opportunities** and celebrate achievements with you.



# Protect

*Partner with landowners and conservation organizations to permanently protect important and threatened lands across Iowa while benefiting water, wildlife and people.*

To save the natural lands we all love, INHF will accelerate its efforts and expand land protection capacity in Iowa.

## Strategies

### Land protection leadership

- Continue the full spectrum of land protection projects, from pristine natural areas to mixed-use working lands.
- Create opportunities to expand public lands with conservation agencies.
- Ensure that conservation easement lands and donated lands are protected in perpetuity according to donors' wishes.
- Focus extra attention on regions where the natural resources are extraordinary and threats are high. This includes the Loess Hills, Northeast Iowa Blufflands region, natural lakes, prairie pothole region, Bird Conservation Areas and Iowa's rivers and floodplains.
- Increase the capacity of local rail-trail project partners to implement projects.
- Maintain excellence in monitoring and upholding conservation easements.

### Outreach

- Help others create conservation legacies through estate planning, donations of land, conservation easements and other options. We excel in helping people turn their vision for their land into reality.
- Make it easier for interested landowners and their advisors to learn about our services. Train volunteers, landowners and professional advisors to promote permanent land protection.

### Expected Results

INHF expects to protect 5,000-8,000 acres annually, bringing the total to 175,000 acres protected through INHF over 40 years. Quality native prairie and woodlands, wildlife corridors, and diverse working lands will be protected.



## Permanent land protection is the heart of INHF.

Since 1979, this has been our most recognized strength and key niche.

Conservation-minded landowners, agencies and leaders rely on INHF for advice, quick action and assistance in saving special places.

Landowners deserve to know that they can ensure their land is always protected.

We bring broad and deep experience to the table, having protected more than 1,000 diverse wild places in 36 years.

# Steward

## *Ensure the long-term health and benefits of conserved lands.*

Because Iowa's landscape has been vastly altered, it is crucial to heal the land, not only for water quality, health and wildlife survival, but also to renew the spirits of people who enjoy the outdoors.

### Strategies

#### Increase capacity

- Increase land stewardship activity to improve the ecological diversity and health of natural areas and working lands under INHF care statewide.
- Launch regional cooperative efforts with other organizations and agencies to increase and sustain restoration efforts. A pilot project in the Loess Hills is now underway.
- Support public and private landowners in the stewardship of permanently protected lands with help from our land stewardship intern crew and volunteer program.

#### Create stewardship opportunities

- Make it possible for more people to experience the transformation process at cherished places and the satisfaction of working together to make a difference for Iowa.
- Train reliable volunteers to lead high-quality volunteer land stewardship efforts.

### Expected Results

Iowans are encouraged and supported in experiencing nature. More wild places are receiving consistent stewardship and returning to health, thanks to a multi-faceted stewardship effort. Momentum is gained through more volunteer leadership, a growing core of devoted volunteers, more partner efforts with Conservation Corps Iowa and the continued strength of our internship program.

## Permanent protection is just half the story.

Restoration is needed to improve water quality and healthy landscapes. Stewardship remedies the spread of invasive species which can degrade the integrity and resilience of natural lands.

We're in a unique position to invite more Iowans to share in this work at protected places, some permanently entrusted to INHF's care, others in our hands only while awaiting transfer to a conservation agency for public enjoyment.



GOAL 3:

# Connect

*Strengthen the connection between conserved places and people who will treasure them.*

## Strategies

### Invite

- Offer more ways for people to connect with nature and support land conservation in Iowa including more gatherings on the land.
- Expand and promote the Iowa By Trail app that brings people closer to nature on trails.

### Speak up

- Provide a strong, non-partisan voice for Iowa conservation in the public arena.
- Inform and support Iowans who want to influence public issues critical to private, voluntary land conservation.
- Continue to provide context and thought-leading commentary for major Iowa media.

## Expected Results

Funding is secured for the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund and other public funds that are crucial to Iowa's land, water and wildlife. A more active volunteer advocacy network will bolster the political will to support land protection and Iowa conservation.

The future of Iowa's land and water depends on the attitudes and actions of Iowans today.

A caring attitude and personal connection with nature must be fostered among more Iowans. This attitude is the first step towards action.

Many committed Iowans look to INHF for opportunities for action, including ways to work towards policy changes with elected local leaders.



GOAL 4:

# Strengthen INHF

*Make our organization ever more capable, resilient and sustainable.*

## Strategies

### Legacy

- Continue to help Iowans shape their conservation legacies, including estate gifts that can boost INHF's capacity to do more for Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

### Accountability

- Maintain our national accreditation through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. This ensures that INHF is strong and capable.

### Diversify

- Search for new ways to finance conservation and permanent land protection in Iowa.
- Bolster diverse and dependable streams of revenue, including endowment growth.

### Invest in people

- Sustain and increase student internship opportunities.
- Spread the expertise, leadership and can-do culture more strongly throughout the organization—board, staff, volunteers, interns and donors. Efficient systems, constant learning and coordination will help everyone do their best for Iowa.

## Expected Results

Conservation momentum grows from the way we work in positive, caring relationships with trusted partners and committed Iowans.

Sustaining this organization is about living up to our promises.

Landowners who have donated land or conservation easements to INHF rely on us to always be there to defend and care for their land.

We must stay strong to do our best by the land and water. We must nurture and support those who understand the need to take action to protect Iowa.

Conservation leadership is needed now more than ever. Much remains to be done to protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife.



# Continue the Legacy

Think beyond a five-year plan with us. Together we can create truly lasting impact for Iowa's land, water, wildlife and people. Generations to come will thank you.



## The Vision of Legacy

Many foundation friends who have gone before us continue to make Iowa better every year. Their legacy gifts to INHF are still saving prairies, educating interns, creating trails, expanding wildlife habitat and protecting land in the regions they called home.

Recent legacies are making it possible for INHF to do so much more and expect greater results in the years ahead!

**What vision do you have for Iowa?** Might INHF share your vision and help make it reality? INHF staff is ready to listen to your dreams, discuss our capabilities and offer ideas on how bequests and other planned gifts might help you make the impact you care about most.

## The Permanence of Land

Choosing the right future for your land is a tremendous responsibility and privilege. Hundreds of wonderful places have been permanently protected because a landowner discussed this important decision with us.

Whether you own natural land, working land, or a blend of the two, we're here to help you consider ways to protect, bequeath or donate your land for conservation. You may be surprised at the tax benefits and peace of mind that await you.

**What vision do you have for your land?** INHF is ready to discuss options and introduce you to the right conservation partner to help make your vision a reality. INHF might even be that right, next caring owner for your land: the one to whom you can knowingly entrust it.



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