Pottawattamie Conservation

# Annual Report

## Fiscal Year 2023-2024



### Board Members

President, Eric Hough, December 31, 2024

Vice President, Jerry Mathiasen, December 31, 2022

Secretary, Mary Kramer, December 31, 2025

Board Member, Brittany Dix, December 31, 2026

Board Member, Chris Ruhaak, December 31, 2028

# Leaving A Legacy

The past year has gone by incredibly fast despite knowing my plan to retire was in the mix. A year long countdown dwindles to a handful of days as quickly as the seasons change and it's difficult to capture thoughts of a single year when you have memories from the past 30 years igniting so many moments of success and failure.

Working for Pottawattamie County Conservation and with the people has been an amazing career with so much growth and change happening the past year.

After the initial purchase of Mt. Crescent Ski Area, an extremely successful first season under county ownership, and major improvements occurring on the property, the second season was impacted by unseasonably warm weather, extreme cold snaps and ultimately one of the worse seasons in terms of "ski" weather over the past 60 years. Regardless of the obstacles, the season was a success thanks to dedicated staff and the community's amazing response to the county-owned facility. Work is underway to complete the master plan and guide Mt. Crescent to a new name and four-season opportunities in the coming years.

A major backbone of Pottawattamie Conservation is our parks and wildlife areas. Trying to keep up with public demand and need is a constant task, from maintaining existing facilities to providing new outdoor recreation activities. All of the parks have seen improvements the past year spurred on by the vision of conservation staff and funding from county obligated bonds and public and private grant dollars. Hitchcock Nature Center added full-service hookup sites, the one-of-a-kind Heartwood Pavilion, and began implementing the use of solar energy to run facilities. Arrowhead Park and Botna Bend Park also saw the addition of of new full hookup sites, along with cottage renovations at Arrowhead Park and maintenance shop improvements at Botna Bend Park. Olde Town Park, the last stop on the West Nishnabotna Water Trail, added a dump station to the small park and campsite hoping to increase recreational opportunities and enhance the nearby attractions of Macedonia.

## Mission Statement

The mission of Pottawattamie Conservation is to provide meaningful experiences for people of all ages with the unique natural resources of Pottawattamie County through diverse and sustainable education, recreation and conservation opportunities.

Complimenting all of our parks and wildlife areas are the Environmental Education (EE) and Natural Areas Management (NAM) programs. Both focus on connecting people with the natural environment by providing quality educational experiences and stewardship of our natural resources. By offering classes and events for all ages, the Environmental Education staff has made a huge impact on the community and how people perceive and enjoy nature. Without our natural resources and the ability to take care and protect areas in Pottawattamie County, we would have no foundation for the people to enjoy and understand the importance of the ecosystems they live in. The NAM department is somewhat unique to County Conservation in Iowa and their work to protect and enhance outdoor areas is never ending, but never forgotten.

We all seem to get caught up in the numbers, willing an organization to succeed based on dollars spent and dollars made. The overall operating and maintenance budget for Pottawattamie Conservation in 2023/24 was $2,111,000 and through user fees was able to collect $520,000 in revenue.

Yes, numbers are important but the real joy and satisfaction of working for a conservation organization comes from the experiences created and the impact you have on someone's life and their well-being. When this happens with people you have come to call family, and are willing to fight for, it makes it even more special.

I am looking forward to the future of Pottawattamie Conservation and the amazing team that works so hard ensuring the success of the organization and making sure there will always be the opportunity for an incredible Pottawattamie Conservation experience.



Mark Shoemaker
Executive Director
1994-2024

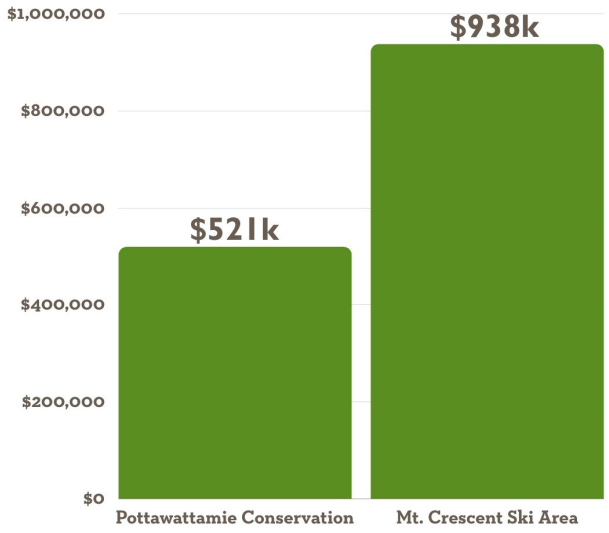


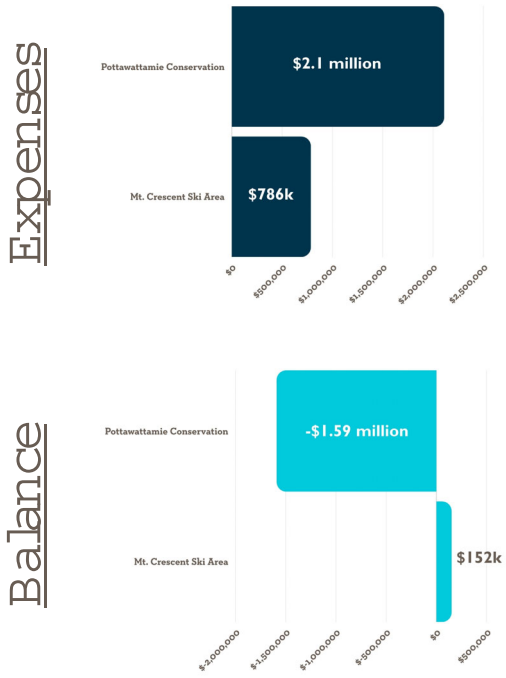
## Organization Highlights

- Updated and camping amenities:
  *Added full hook up campsites at Arrowhead Park (13 sites), Botna Bend Park (11), and Hitchcock Nature Center (9 sites)
  *Added partial hook up sites (9 sites) at Botna Bend Park
  *Added electric-only sites (10 sites) at Arrowhead Park
  *Expanded Hilltop and White Pine cottages to include one bedroom, a 3/4 restroom, and a full kitchen (Cottages sleep up to six)
  *Installed a dump station at Olde Town Park
- Made the following improvements at Hitchcock Nature Center:
  *Finished construction on the new Heartwood Pavilion
  *Installed a new manganese water treatment system
  *Began installing solar panels to power facilities
- Made the following improvements at Mt. Crescent Ski Area:
  *Installed a new, state-of-the-art snowmaking system and pump house
  *Purchased four additional snow machines
  *Finished electrical upgrades
- Hosted statewide Iowa County Conservation System conference, "Living with Loess"
- Pottawattamie Conservation was honored to win three awards this fiscal year. Mt. Crescent was awarded "best attraction" by the Iowa Tourism Office and the Omaha Metropolitan Area Tourism Awards. Hitchcock Nature Center won an Environment & Open Space Award at the Laurel Awards by Omaha By Design for trail expansions.

# Financial Reporting

## Revenue



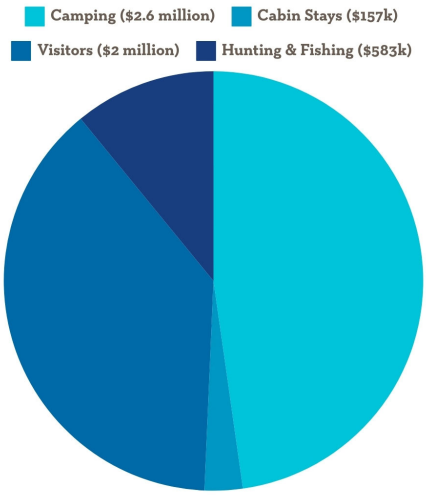




## Economic Analysis

Tourism and outdoor recreation have impacts on local communities that go well beyond the ability to directly offset tax dollars utilized to support park operations. Each type of activity also results in economic impacts on the surrounding local communities. For example, an RV or cabin camping trip generates visitor spending on fuel, food, camping supplies, and other camping-related items that are not reflected in the fees collected.

The Iowa County Conservation System (ICCS), in partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IaDNR), have compiled data on the economic impacts that different outdoor recreational activities have on local economies.* The information to the right represents the economic impact Pottawattamie Conservation recreational activities have on surrounding communities.

*Numbers provided by ICCS and IaDNR were taken from studies conducted in 2012. When adjusted for 2024 dollars, it is reasonable to assume that the economic impact from recreational activities is even greater than what is represented on this page.



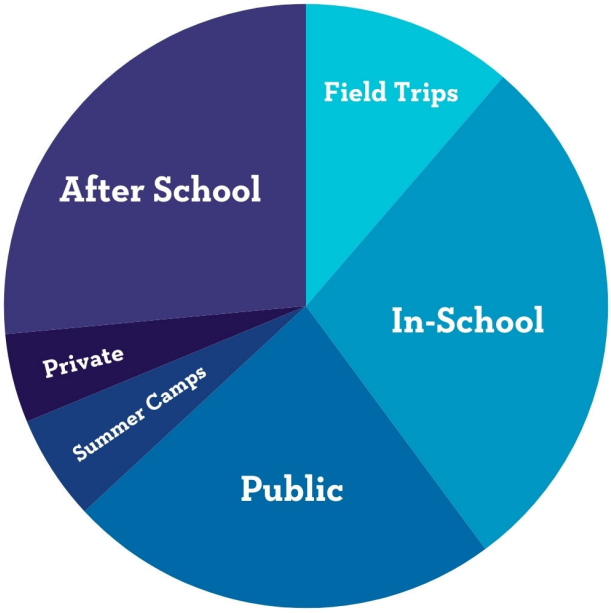

Total Economic Impact: $5,337,910.70

Total Tax Investment: $2,111,374.00

Return/Dollar Invested: $2.53

# Environmental Education

More than 300 Programs Offered
More than 8,000 Participants Served





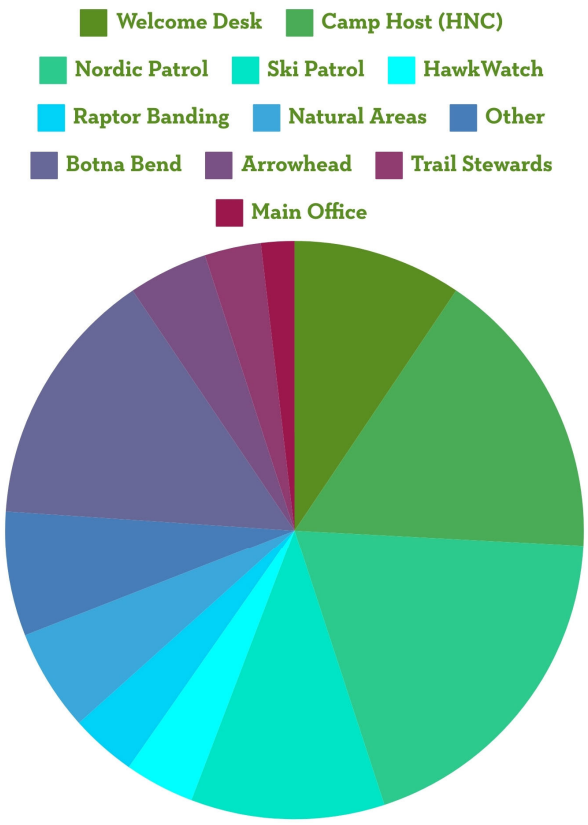
Meander & Gander with Lindsay Knieper


Maple Tree Tap

# Volunteer Hours: 9,242

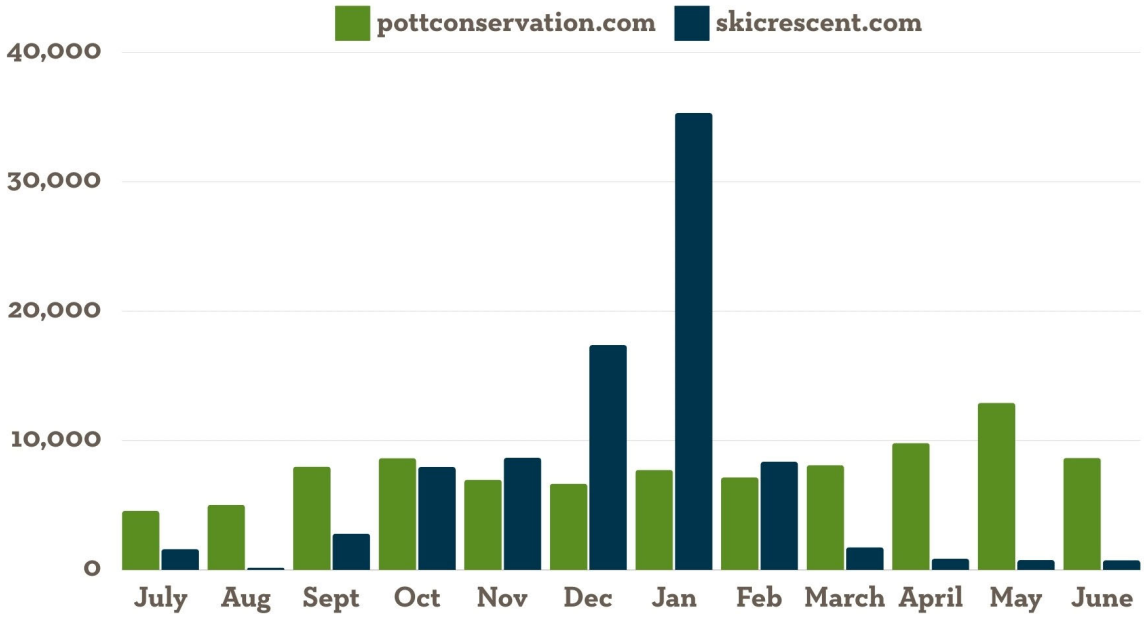

National Trails Day


Litter Busters Park Cleanup



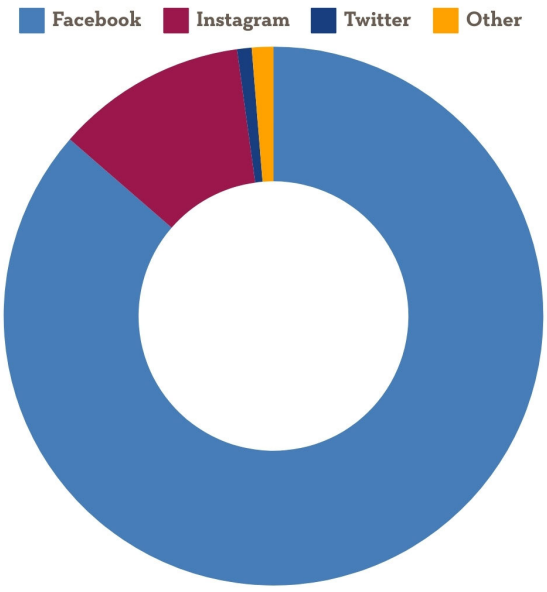
# Website Visitors: 179,448

pottconservation.com | 94,856 (+44% YOY)
skicrescent.com | 84,592 (-21% YOY)




## Social Reach

Users Reached | 3,495,984 (+8% YOY)
Followers | 53,000 (+166% YOY)

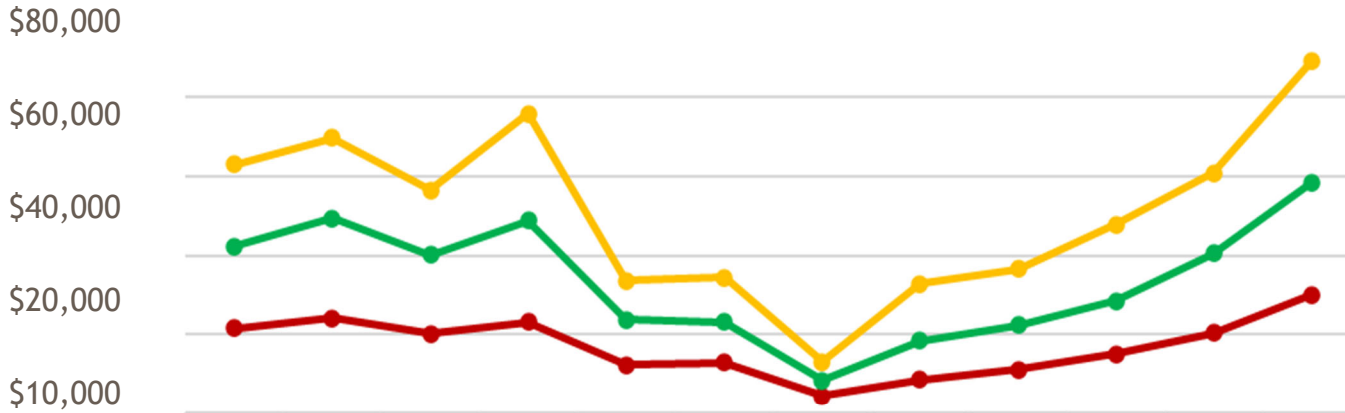






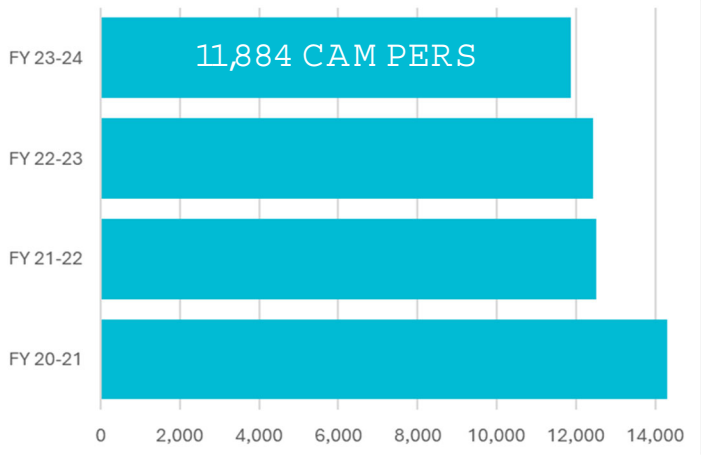


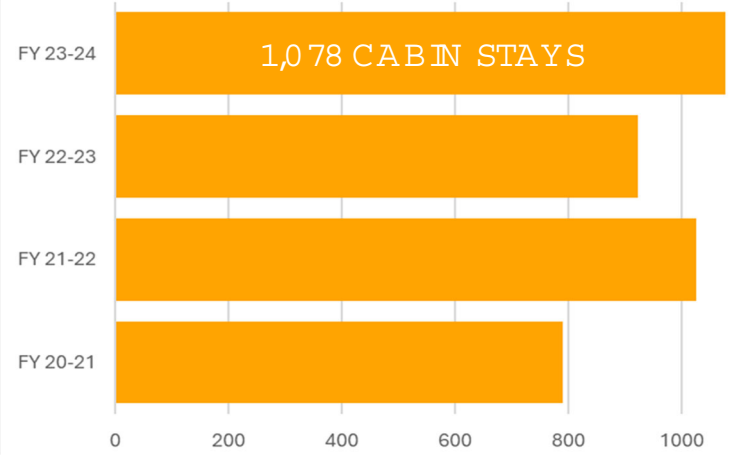
## User Fees 2023-2024: $521,103 | +4% YOY

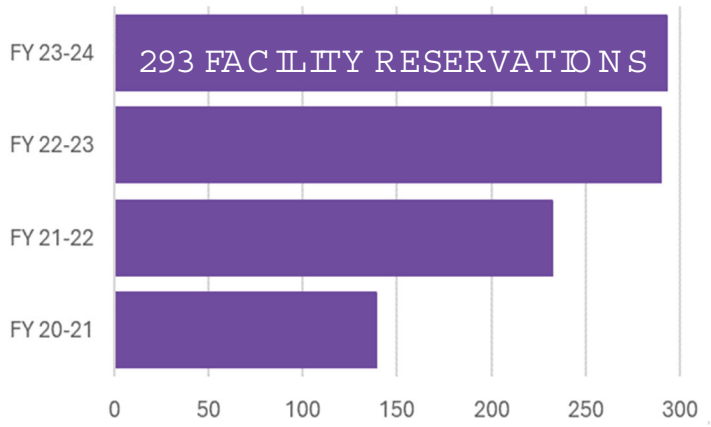


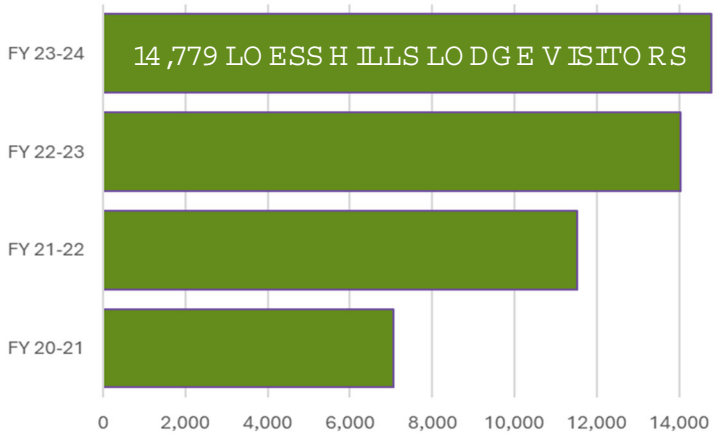

| | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | March | April | May | June |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2023-24 | $51,4 | $50,6 | $40,9 | $67,2 | $24,5 | $27,9 | $11,3 | $36,2 | $35,7 | $47,7 | $50,4 | $76,7 |
| 2022-23 | $51,8 | $62,7 | $49,6 | $63,7 | $28,5 | $25,8 | $10,1 | $24,4 | $27,7 | $33,4 | $50,2 | $70,6 |
| 2021-22 | $53,9 | $60,7 | $50,6 | $58,2 | $30,8 | $32,3 | $11,2 | $21,6 | $28,1 | $38,0 | $51,0 | $75,4 |

## Fiscal Year Overview



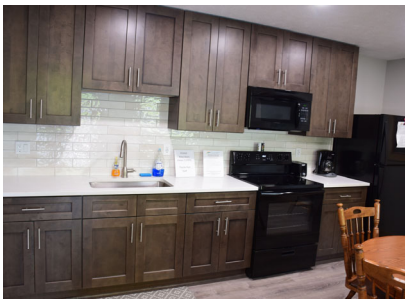







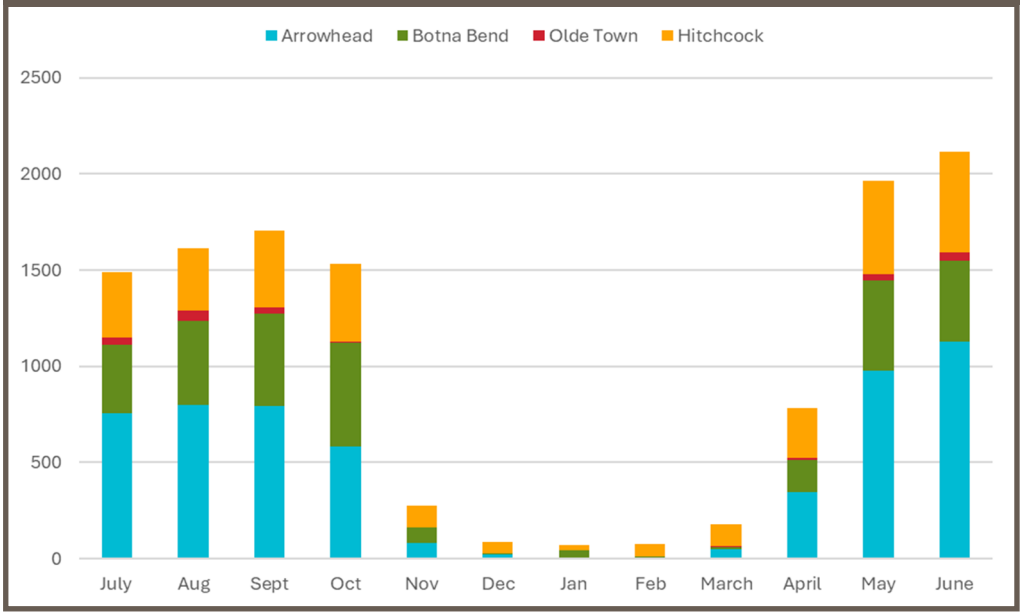




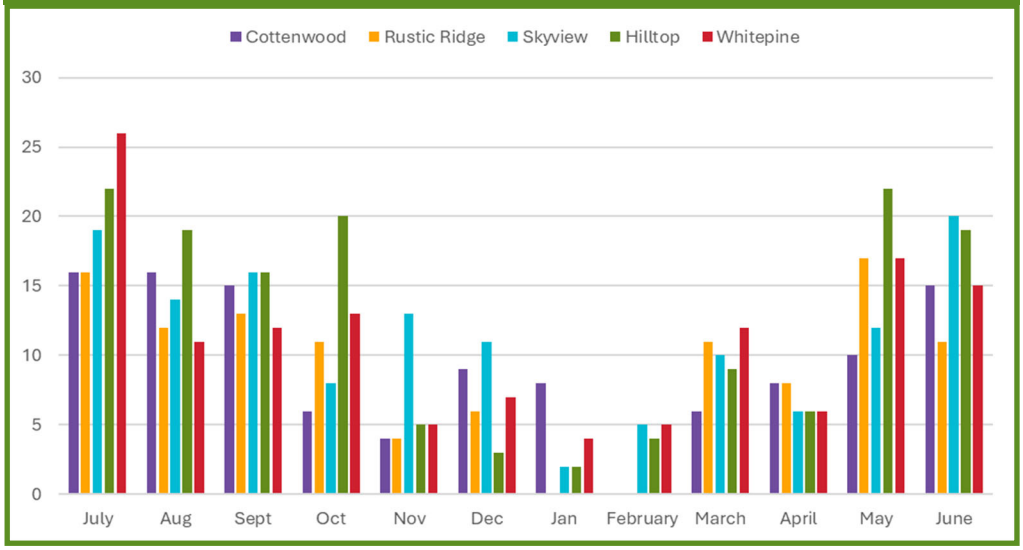




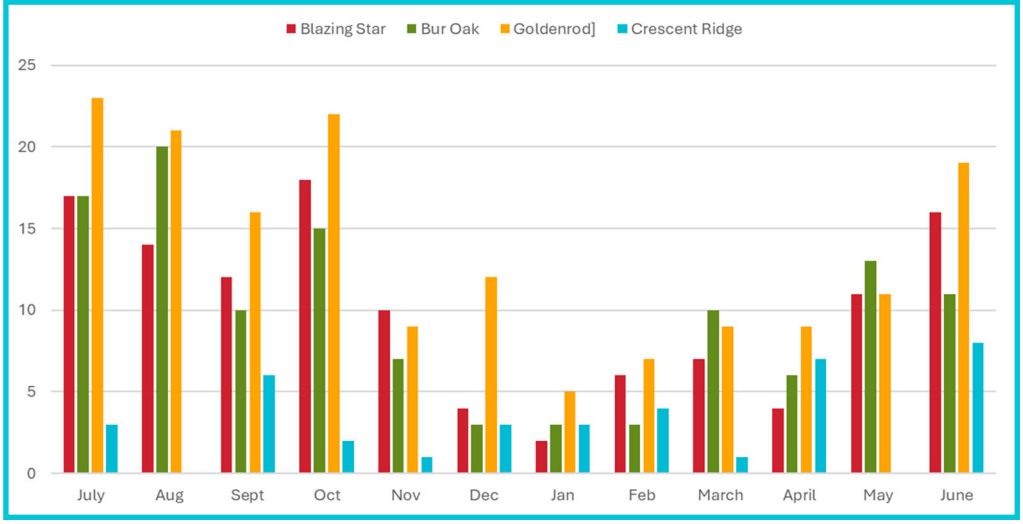
## Campers Per Park Per Month




## Arrowhead Park Cabin Stays Per Month (FY Revenues $81,676)

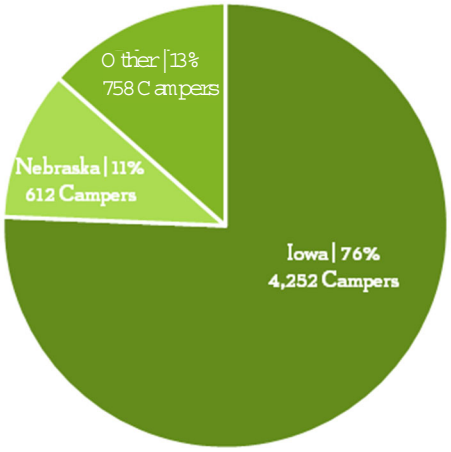



## Hitchcock Nature Center Cabin Stays Per Month (FY Revenues $32,050)

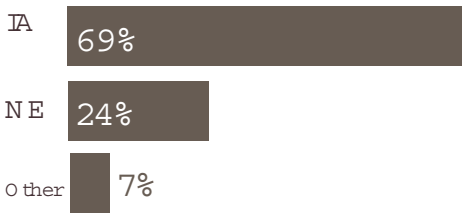


# Camping & Daily Use Demographics: State

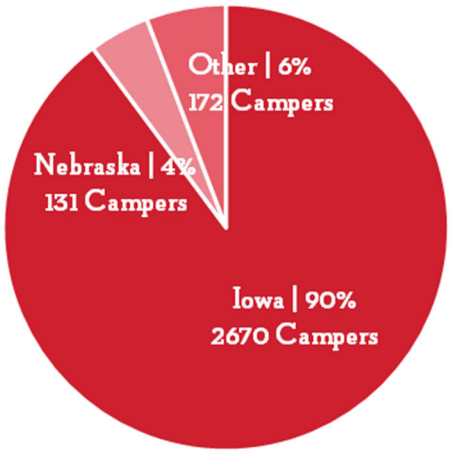
## Arrowhead Park




Daily Usage



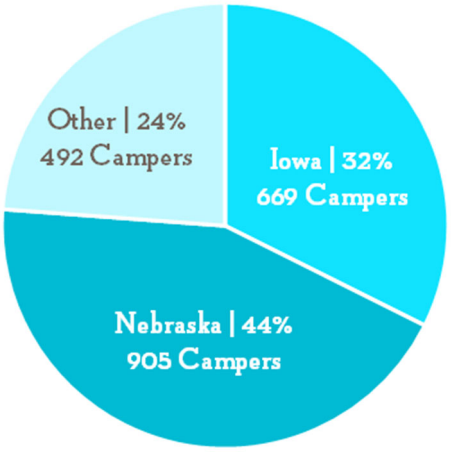

## Botna Bend Park



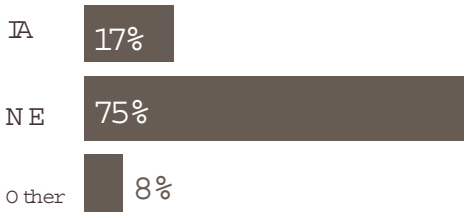

Daily Usage



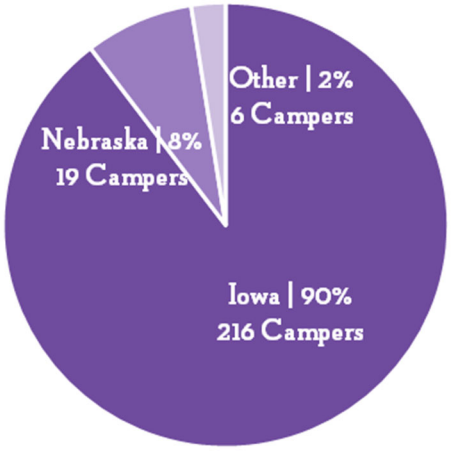

## Hitchcock Nature Center




Daily Usage




## Olde Town Park




Daily Usage

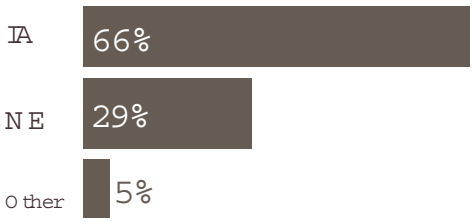





*Above: Testing of the new snowmaking system at Mt. Crescent Ski Area.*

## Narrows River Park

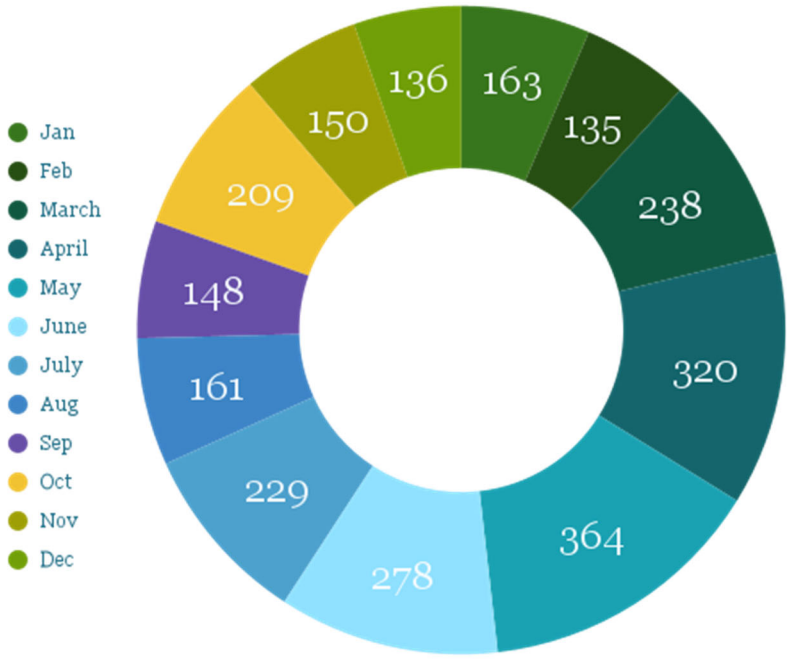
Daily Usage

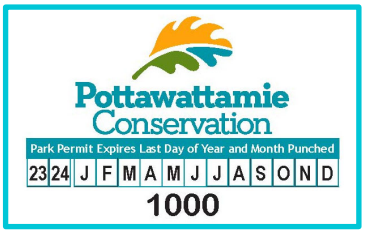





*Above: Picture of Loess Hills Lodge*

## Park Memberships 2023: 2,531 | +5% YOY

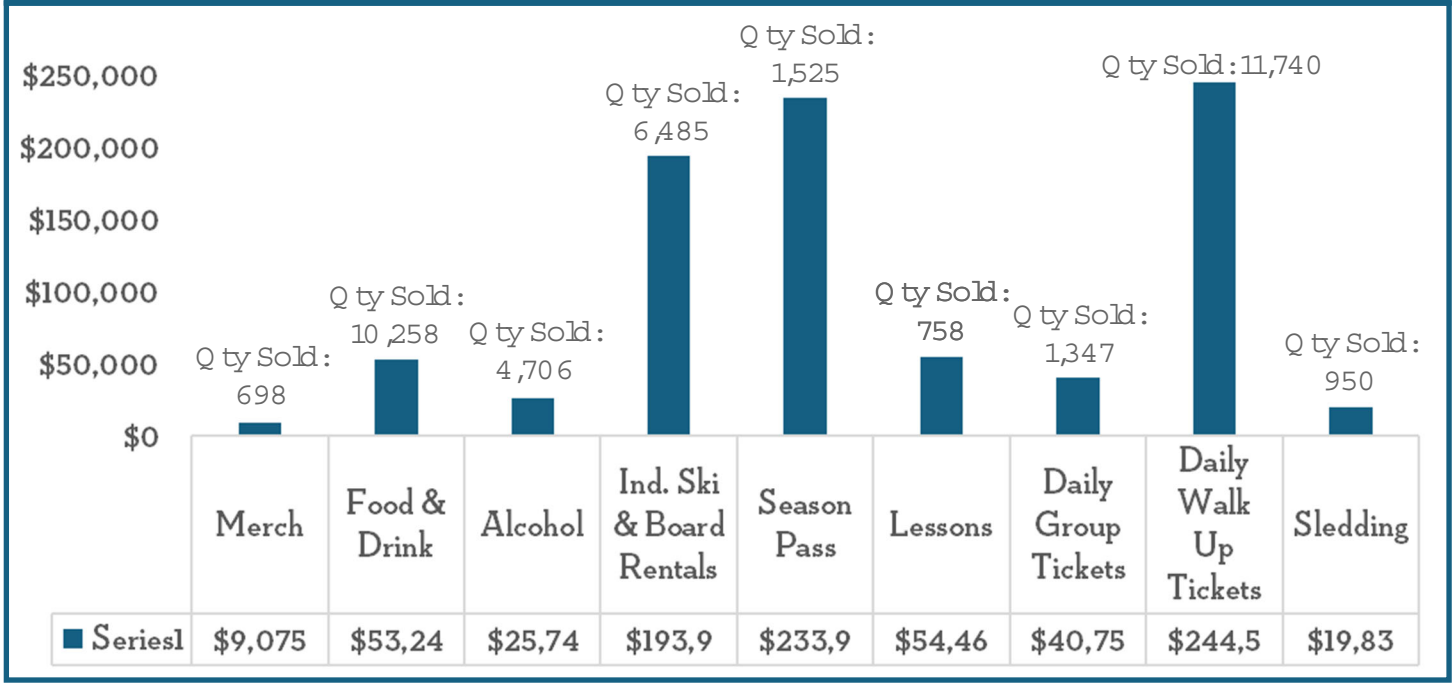



### Membership Details

- In-county: 814
- Out-of-county: 1249
- Family: 209
- Supporter: 100
- Extra: 83

## 2023-2024 Mt. Crescent Ski Season























Pottawattamie County
Conservation