

Draft
Minutes of the Allamakee County Conservation Board

The Allamakee County Conservation Board met in regular session at 1:00 P.M. Tuesday September 6, 2022 in the Board Office located at 1944 Columbus Rd. Lansing, Iowa. Board members present were as follows: Jeanie Carroll, Jesse Delaney, and Dennis Koenig. Attendees from the public included Francis Garrett, Marsha Garrett Kurth, and Bill O'Conner. Also attending Mark Rieser from the Allamakee County Board of Supervisors, and Conservation Board staff members Erin Cubbon, Ross Geerdes, and Jarrod Olson.

The Meeting was called to order at 1:00 P.M. and the agenda and minutes from the previous meeting were approved upon a motion by Carroll, second Koenig, all in favor, motion carried.

Claims, revenues, and fiscal year balances and budget summaries were reviewed and approved by the Board upon a motion by Koenig, second Carroll, all in favor, motion carried.

Francis Garrett, Marsha Garrett Kurth, and Bill O'Conner were in attendance to speak to the Board about the preservation of the Black Hawk Bridge. They stated they are working to see if there is any possible way to save the entire bridge or a portion of it by moving it to another location. They asked the Board if the Board would be willing to draft a letter in support of these efforts. The group advised if the Conservation Board supported their efforts their next steps would be to approach the Allamakee County Conservation Foundation Board to ask if they would be willing to be a fiscal agent for the project to help in obtaining possible available grant dollars. The group would then go to the Allamakee County Board of Supervisors informing them of their intentions and ask for their support as well. If and when these steps were to be completed, the group would then begin work on a feasibility study for the project. The group did leave some informational sheets with the Board and asked that they be included in the meeting minutes. (please see the attached sheets) After a brief discussion a motion was made by Koenig to draft a letter supporting the group's efforts, second Carroll, all in favor, motion carried.

A summary of the Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center 5-year Anniversary event, was provided to the Board. The event had good attendance with an estimate of 175-200 people in attendance. Guests were provided drinks and hors d'oeuvres. A short program was given, and there were several silent auction items that had been donated by local businesses and individuals. Guests were very complimentary of the evening.

Information was provided to the Board regarding grant opportunities from the National Wild Turkey Federation. Monies were available to help cost share, land acquisition, habitat improvement, as well as equipment for habitat improvement that could benefit the wild turkey population. With the grant having a deadline of September 9th, and there not being any immediate projects or needs it was advised to possibly work on submitting a grant during the next grant cycle.

Department updates to the Board included: seasonal employees being done and returning to school, streambank work set to begin on Clear Creek at the Garrett Property, upcoming environmental education programs and scheduled hunter education classes, and visitor center attendance numbers. The Board was also informed about a donor interested in helping fund a larger aquarium in the visitor center classroom area. Board staff had reached out to several

aquarium builders, receiving quotes and working with the possible donor. The Board will be informed as the project moves forward.

The next Board meeting will be at 1:00 P.M. Tuesday October 4, 2022.

There being no additional business a motion was made by Koenig to adjourn the meeting, second Carroll, all in favor, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 P.M.

To: Members of the Allamakee County Conservation Board
Submitted on: 9/6/2022
By: Francis Garrett and Marsha Garrett Kurth

Life is fleeting. It goes fast. Occasionally, we are given an opportunity to be part of something that will outlast us. This Driftless Center is one example of that type of opportunity. Preserving the beautiful Black Hawk Bridge is another.

It is just such a unique bridge that we would like to ask, "could all or part of it be preserved?".

While it may not be easy, if it can be done Allamakee County can do it!

We are hoping that it could stay in its current location. If it were converted to bicycle/pedestrian use, it wouldn't need as much support as it does for motor traffic. It makes us wonder if they could remove the barge obstructions by redoing the bridge with wider spaced supports.

Maybe an observation deck could work in its current location if we can't keep the entire structure. But that's not nearly as cool as a walk/bicycle trail.

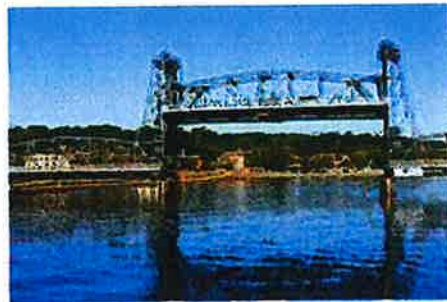
If the entire structure or part of it was to be moved, we would obviously have to do a feasibility study.

We also plan on applying to have the bridge listed on the National Registry of Historic places.

There is a Facebook page for the Black Hawk Bridge that tell of its history and has several pictures.

Stillwater MN did something like we are proposing in 2017 with their bridge.

The Stillwater Bridge is a vertical-lift bridge crossing the St. Croix River between Stillwater, Minnesota, and Houlton, Wisconsin. It formerly connected Minnesota State Highway 36 and Wisconsin Highway 64. Around 18,000 vehicles crossed the bridge daily. The new St. Croix Crossing bridge crossing the St. Croix river valley to the south of Stillwater replaced its purpose, having opened to highway traffic on August 2, 2017, leaving the Stillwater Lift Bridge to be preserved and to be converted to bicycle/pedestrian use.



The bridge in 2013 with its lift span raised

The Stillwater bridge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989 for having state-level significance in the theme of engineering.

The mile long, Big River Crossing in Memphis TN is the country's longest active bike-pedestrian rail bridge and the longest public pedestrian bridge across the Mississippi River.

Thank you for your time and attention. We hope you will consider supporting and working with us on this idea and will endorse the project.

Respectfully,

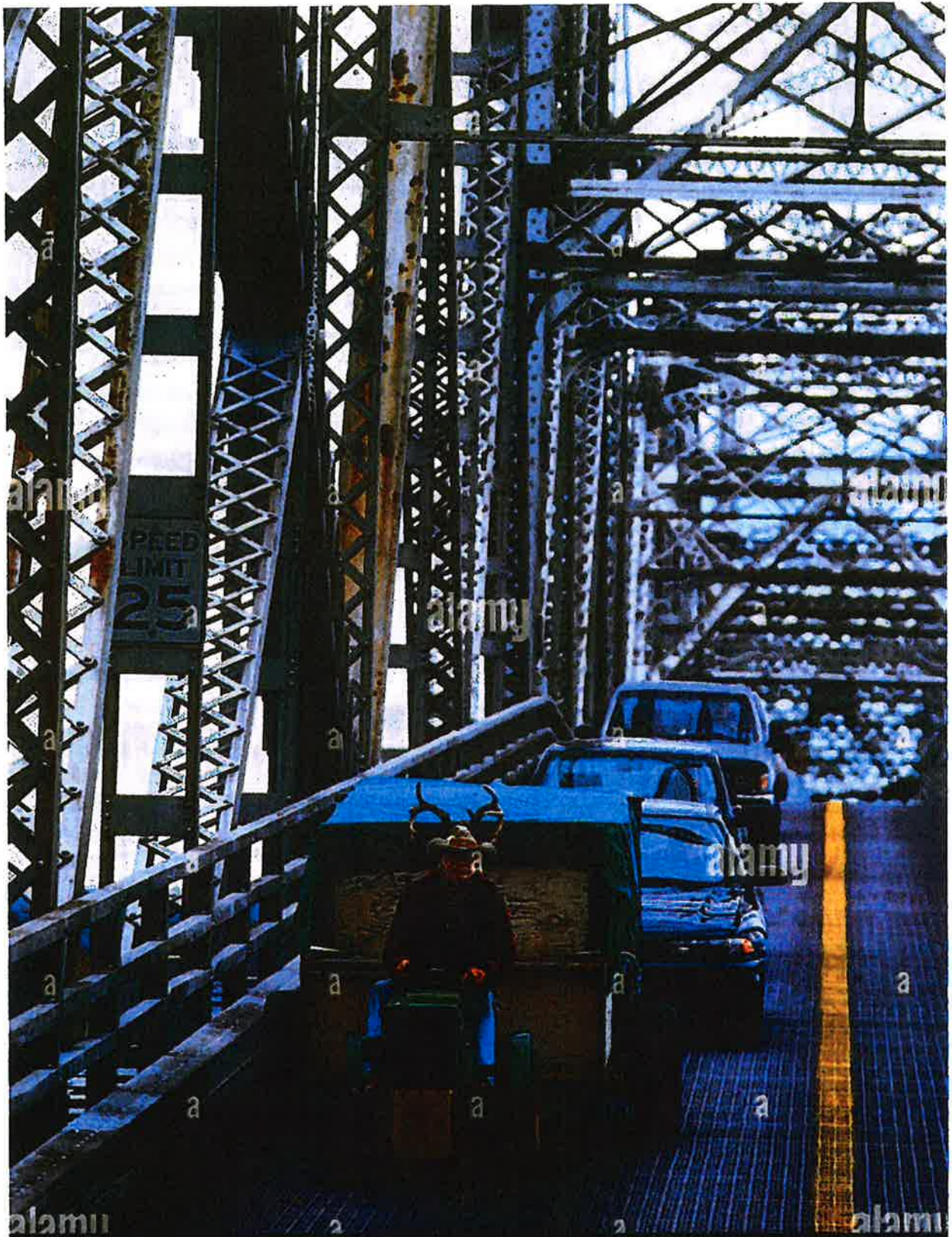
This is perhaps the most unusual bridge that crosses the Mississippi River. It has what appears to be a single Warren Truss bridge section in the middle held up by two cantilevered steel trusses. While this bridge has served well for 70 years, the DOT from Iowa and Wisconsin have concluded that this bridge is obsolete. Even worse, traffic levels and the remoteness of the bridge do not warrant the cost of new bridge. DOT officials have considered closing this bridge, leaving a 63-mile gap between crossings in La Crosse and Prairie du Chien.

This is not the Black Hawk Bridge's first brush with closing. An ice jam in 1945 caused the failure of one of the four approach bridges. The bridge operator could not afford to fix the damage and the company failed. As a result, the bridge remained closed from 1945 to 1957, when it was bought by the States of Iowa and Wisconsin. The two states replaced the approach bridges and refurbished the main span structure.

Movie buffs might remember seeing the Black Hawk Bridge in the 1999 movie called "The Straight Story". The movie featured the story of Alvin Straight, an elderly man from Iowa who has failing eyesight and had lost his ability to drive. Straight gets a phone call that his estranged brother has had a stroke. Despite his brother being 250 miles to the east in Wisconsin, Straight sets off in his John Deere lawn mower to see his brother and mend the fences. Straight crossed a different bridge, but the Black Hawk Bridge was used in the movie.

The bridge is named after Chief Black Hawk of the Sauk tribe. They are most noted for an uprising to try to reclaim their land in 1832. After being trapped along the river, Black Hawk tried to surrender. The Army troops did not understand his gesture and killed the two Sauk peace emissaries. The next day, the Sauk were pinned down in a major battle, where they took heavy losses. Some Sauk escaped across the Mississippi River, only to be killed by the Sioux. The battle has since become known as the Bad Axe Massacre. — source Black Hawk Bridge

Facebook Page



"The Straight Story" about the Black Hawk Bridge