



Upper Iowa River Restoration and Education

The Iowa Water Center (IWC)
Iowa DNR

Mississippi River Basin



BACKGROUND

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation acquired the Ryan Property, a 1234-acre parcel, in February 2007. The land is situated along the Upper Iowa River, a tributary to the Mississippi River. The Upper Iowa River is one of only five Protected Water Areas designated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. This classification recognizes the river as an exceptional natural resource, one located in karst topography with a sensitive relationship between surface and groundwater. Original surveyor records from 1849 describe the Ryan property as – timber very scattering oaks, and the river was described as having a “prairie bottom.” For over 150 years fire has been suppressed, large grazers extirpated, prairies plowed for row crops and as a result the original the oak savanna converted into dense forests with poor ground cover. This project is a major step toward returning a vast area to ecological health through stewardship and will contribute to the understanding of native ecosystem.

LOCATION

Allamakee County, Iowa, along the Upper Iowa River, adjacent to Iowa DNR Pine Creek Wildlife Area.

ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED

Principal objectives:

1. Continue restoration of the Upper Iowa River ecosystem and begin restoration of existing neglected habitats on the property.
2. Reduce habitat fragmentation to create larger blocks of diverse habitat and connect them to adjoining public lands;
3. Begin stream bank restoration to improve water quality of the Upper Iowa River;
4. Conduct species surveys of the property through a rapid assessment process currently known as a “BioBlitz”;
5. Educate the public about threats to northeast Iowa ecosystems through field experience with experts.

RESULTS

Lm w/ joe mcgovern 10/29

OUTCOMES/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Transition to healthy riparian ecosystem
- Increased native flora and fauna species richness
- Adaptive management of prairie-savanna-woodland ecosystem continues
- Increased public awareness of conservation issues

PARTNERS

The Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have partnered to initiate the Upper Mississippi River Watershed Fund. The Foundation grants projects that benefit the forests of the Upper Mississippi while improving wildlife habitat and water quality.

FUTURE PLANS

The future home for the Ryan property is likely the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). By the time it is transferred, the property will have undergone several critical years of restoration and be transferred to public ownership in a healthier condition.

CONTACTS

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GRANT AMOUNT

\$75,000
