



# Pottawattamie County Conservation Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report



## Member

## Position

## Term Expires

Eric Hough

President

December 31, 2019

Mary Kramer

Vice President

December 31, 2020

John Newman

Secretary

December 31, 2022

Chris Ruhaak

Member

December 31, 2023

Joyce Isaacson

Member

December 31, 2021

# Mission Statement

Offer unique, high quality recreational opportunities for the visitors and citizens of Pottawattamie County through the development of parks, habitat and other facilities. Create environmental education and recreation programs that reach all levels. Enhance the natural areas of Pottawattamie County to create connections to the natural environment and foster responsible stewardship for future generations.



## Significant Activities FY2019

During Fiscal Year 2019, the Conservation Board held ten regular monthly meetings. The official copies of the minutes of each of these meetings are public record and are available for inspection and review in the office of the Conservation Board in the County Courthouse Annex, Council Bluffs, Iowa. At these meetings the Conservation Board:

- Approved the Water Trail Development Grant Agreement with the Iowa DNR for the construction of a restroom at Old Town Park. We have received a 50/50 grant match of \$22,000 . We also hope to upgrade the Nishnabotna Water Trail from a Recreational Trail to a Gateway Trail.
- Hired new Naturalist, Michelle Biodrowski.
- Approved HGM proposal for a redesign Hitchcock Nature Center entrance.
- In January, started charging a flat fee of \$75 for the Narrows shelter and switched charging for public programs and free in school programs to schools in Pottawattamie County.
- Awarded website redesign to Neapolitan Labs & rebranding to Webster Design.
- Approved funding for up to 50% match of the Pottawattamie Conservation Foundation to create a video to capture the what and the why behind Pottawattamie Conservation to house on the new website.

### Donations received:

donation box	\$ 455.25	LHL
Chilifeed	\$ 864.00	Arrowhead
Pancake Feed	\$ 1,640.00	Botna Bend

### Grants Received:

CEP REAP Grant	\$ 7,953.00	Citizen Land Steward Project
Humanities	\$ 1,694.00	Speaker Series
Audubon Society of Omaha	\$ 2,000.00	Loess Hills Fire Partners
The Nature Conservancy	\$ 8,600.00	Loess Hills Fire Partners
IDOT-Federal Recreational Trails Grant	\$ 49,864.63	RR Hwy Bike Trail
Wellmark Foundation	\$100,000.00	RR Hwy Bike Trail





# Significant Activities FY 2019 (Cont.)

## Administrative:

- Had significant flooding in March at Botna Bend and Narrows River Parks. Most staff helped out with flood cleanup and animal roundup.
- Coordinated REAP Legacy Night with legislatures and candidates at Hitchcock. REAP stands for Resource Enhancement and Protection. It is a program in the State of Iowa that invests in, as its name implies, the enhancement and protection of the state's natural and cultural resources and is to sunset in 2021.
- Opposed legislation that reduces the ability to protect and restore natural areas
- We are working towards converting mowed turf to native habitat in a few of the parks
- Held a dedication and recognition for the Parrott family at Wheeler Grove Conservation Area.
- Coordinated with Leadership Council Bluffs Class 31 to support re-branding data collection needs
- Our law enforcement vehicles received new computers. Staff has been undergoing testing and training including: TRACS, Zuercher, and MAC.
- Staff participated in the Dream Playground buildout
- Hitchcock Nature Center is part of the State's announced effort for residents and visitors to explore Iowa's outdoors with the "99 Counties, 99 Parks" initiative.
- 10 staff were nominated for the Omaha Metro Area Tourism Awards
- We brought in record revenue user fees of \$47,000 in July, over \$55,000 in August, and over \$38,000 in October. We were still above our projected revenue amounts by \$23,000 but down 5% the previous year. Revenue more than likely would've exceeded previous years if flooding hadn't impacted the parks.



Flooding at Narrows Park closes the boat ramp and caused the park to remain closed for most of the season.



Staff helping at the Dream Playground.



Kody Wohlers & Kate Simmons at OMA Awards

## Arrowhead Park:

- The annual Chili Fest was a huge success with a larger turn out than past year. More campers handed out candy during the hay rake ride. A lot of kids dressed up and enjoyed the scavenger hunt and the pumpkins. We did a free will donation this year and had over \$800.00 dollars donated.
- With the cold temperatures this past winter, we had a lot of ice fisherman.
- The obstacle run on April 27th had 131 runners; 23 more than last year.



Fishing Derby at Arrowhead

- Several out of state campers from Alaska and Canada stated that they really like Arrowhead Park and will make a future stop again.
- We had a very successful fishing derby. The biggest fish caught was an 18 inch bass and the smallest was a 4 inch bass. There were a little over 50 kids.
- The Ted Nugent Kamp for Kids had 107 kids. All got prizes and giveaways.



# Significant Activities FY 2019 (Cont.)

## Botna Bend Park:

- Installed a new seesaw at Botna Bend playground that was purchased with donations made to PCF
- Pancake Fee in August had 400+ in attendance with the help of 15 staff and volunteers
- Our All Hallows Eve event had: 20 decorated campsites, 15 attended Friday night story, 50 attended raptor program, 35 attended Saturday night movie, 30 attended arts and crafts, 25 attended face painting, 20 children and 10 adults participated in pumpkin throwing
- Cory Thomas, Assistant Park Ranger, went to the National Bison Association Conference in Denver this January. He learned about pink eye issues, genetic traits to look for when purchasing bison, and networked with potential buyers from out of state.
- Bison calf born – 10/11/18, 5/25/19
- Sold a 2 year old bull bison
- Elk calf born – 5/26/19, 5/28/19, 5/31/19, 6/2/19, 6/20/19
- Tree Tap program in March had help with volunteers from TriCenter FFA and SWCD. Approximately 120 attended. It was still too cold for sap to flow and due to flooding, buckets and equipment had to be removed.
- Botna Bend Park will remain closed until fences are determined to be secure (hopeful by Sept 2019).
- Old Town Park remained closed until roads were cleared of mud and debris removed from area and was able to open to the public in June.



New seesaw at Botna Bend



Maple Tree Tap at Botna Bend



Staff work on flood repairs at Botna Bend.

## Hitchcock Nature Center:

- The lodge floors were finally finished at Hitchcock from the water damage incident last year.
- Repurposed the old Narrows office for seasonal housing
- The campground shop/office got a new A/C unit
- 3D bow shoot had around 50 participants
- Zoo Run was had around 150 walkers/runners
- Bethany Thorton, our HawkWatch Counter, attended the national HMNA hawk watch conference. Many were impressed with the hawk watch program at Hitchcock. We are interested in hosting the conference in 2020.



Annual HawkWatch 5K Trail Run & Walk



Raptor Banders with Red-tailed Hawk



# Significant Activities FY 2019 (Cont.)

## Narrows River Park:

- The park was greatly affected by high river water and flooding throughout the year. The July and October Summer Concert Series had to be cancelled due to flooding and weather.
- The park boat ramp due was closed on and off throughout July -August.
- Park closed from September 24th-October 1st due to flooding and was not able to open in the spring due to flooding in March and persistent high water levels. Park remained closed for the entirety of 2019, any repairs made to the park will be on hold until high risk of flooding subsides.
- River peaked at 34.41' in Omaha on 3/17/19. At peak there was about 4' of water in the restrooms.
- Worst damage was to boat dock and dock poles which are all bent over. Also damage to a light pole, railing at the overlook shelter, most electrical will need replaced, and most of the gravel parking lot was silted over. Lost 10 picnic tables, some trash cans and Adirondack chairs. Playground and shelters seem to have fared well.



Boat ramp closed at Narrows.

## Natural Areas Management:

- Pheasants Forever Habitat Area was hayed for thistle control (32 bales)
- Farm Creek Public Wildlife Area's hay rotation #2 was completed with a few additional areas for thistle management. Kody worked with Brian Alf to coordinate custom haying. 600 square bales and 34 round bales hauled to Botna Bend for bison/elk feed. Remaining 174 bales were sold and hauled to local buyer by NAM and BB staff.
- Worked with local producer to begin grazing with cattle at Hitchcock
- Treated 900 acres at HNC with prescribed fire
- Kody went on a western fire detail to Wyoming, Oregon
- Jordan went on a western fire detail to Oregon, Colorado
- Chad went on a western fire detail to Colorado
- Hosted the National Park Service annual refresher
- Trail maintenance, clean up following storms in August. Substantial tree damage along trail system, but trails held very well for receiving 11" of rainfall in a short time period.
- Re-routed 3 stretches on Badger Ridge to avoid problem slopes. Transplanted some plants to help heal the old scars.
- Traded one NAM ranger, second will go to NRP, purchased two Polaris Ranger 900XP
- Kody was keynote speaker for IPN Annual meeting in Coon Rapids and scored antlers and skulls at the outdoor expo. Kody became Pope & Young certified to measure and score North American big game.



NAM prescribed fire



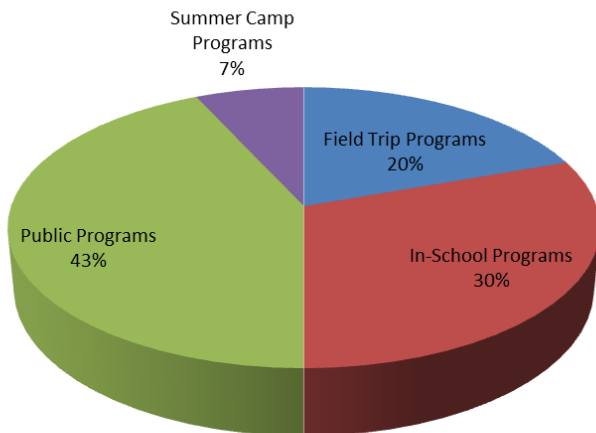
Kody scoring at the River City Hunting and Fishing Expo

# Significant Activities FY2019 (Cont.)

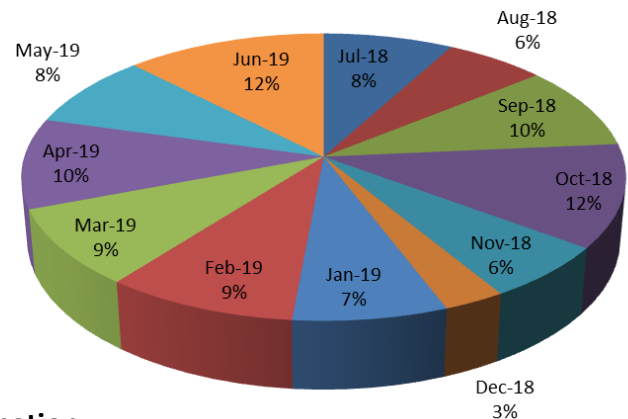
## Environmental Education:

- Hired new Naturalist, Michelle Biodrowski
- Prepared new middle school curriculum
- New Master Conservationist Program
- Prepared and hosted first Adult Summer Camp at Hitchcock Nature Center
- Partnered with RC&D and Pott. Co. GIS to record footage of the West Nishnabotna River
- Partnered with RC&D and Pott. Co. Sanitation for new programming opportunities
- Manned a touch table (furs and skulls) at the River City Hunting & Fishing Expo

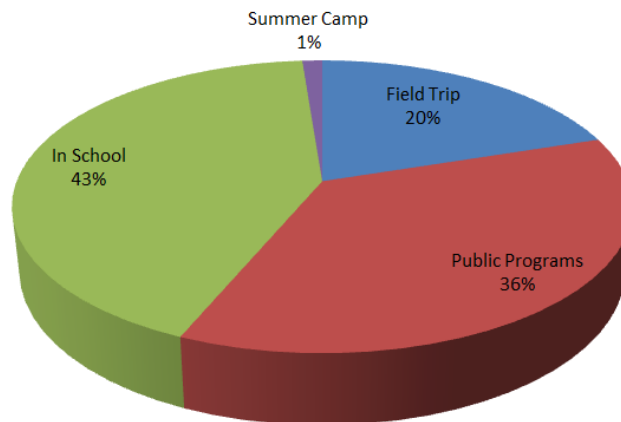
### EE Programs by Type



### Number of Programs by Month



### EE Programs by Participation



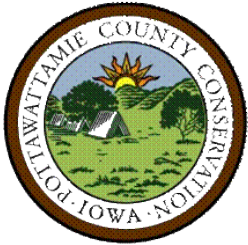
Sweethearts Love Nature



Nature on Tap



Pott Co Almanac

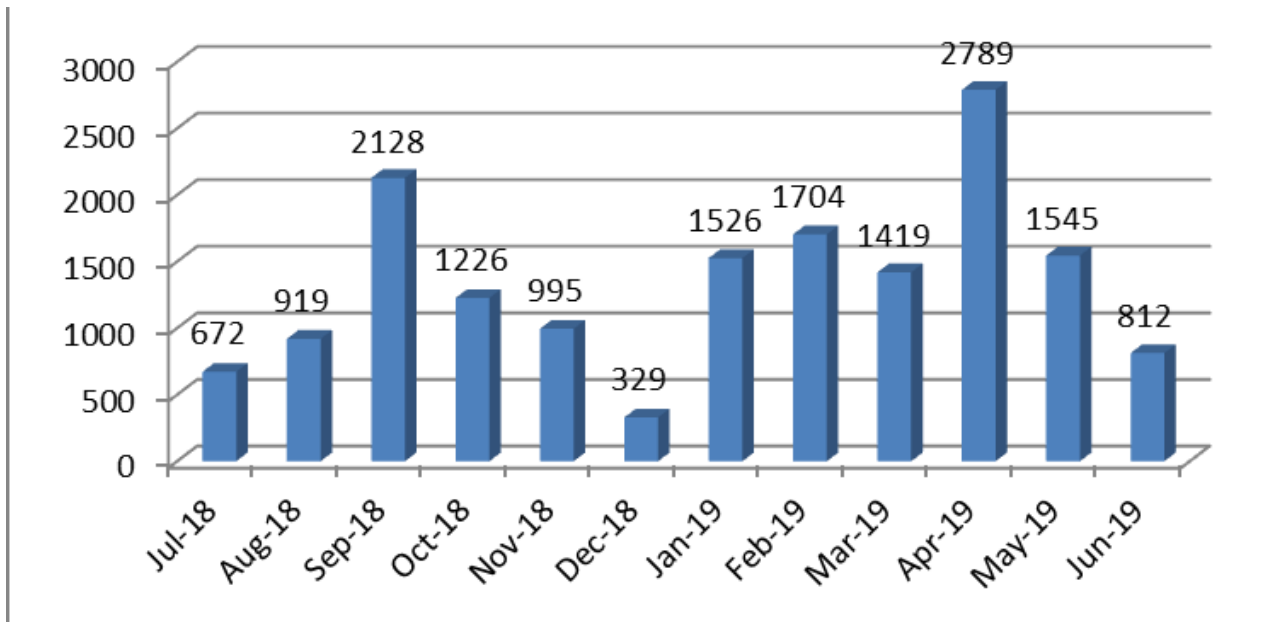


# Pottawattamie Conservation Education Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)

FY 2019 educational programs presented by Pottawattamie Conservation included:

Participation per Month



Year	# of participants
FY 2019	16,064
FY 2018	17,952
FY 2017	16,202
FY 2016	11,803
FY 2015	15,947
FY 2014	15,244
FY 2013	16,551
FY2012	15,759
FY2011	17,513
FY2010	16,900
FY2009	16,172
FY2008	15,040
FY2007	14,202
FY2006	14,164



Year	# of presentations
FY 2019	276
FY 2018	336
FY 2017	957
FY 2016	906
FY 2015	1,504
FY 2014	1,357
FY 2013	1,400
FY 2012	1,416



# Pottawattamie Conservation Education Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)

## Partnerships—General:

Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA)  
Council Bluffs Leadership Program  
Council Bluffs Public Library  
Council Bluffs Rotary  
DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge  
Fontenelle Forest & Fontenelle Forest's Raptor Recovery  
Girl and Boy Scouts of Greater Iowa  
Green Hills AEA  
Harvest Spoon  
Hawk Migration Association of North America  
Hitchcock HawkWatch  
Humanities Iowa  
Hy-Vee-Council Bluffs  
Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards (IACCB)  
Iowa Association of Naturalists (IAN)  
Iowa Childcare Resource & Referral  
Iowa Conservation Education Coalition (ICEC)  
Iowa DNR (Fish Iowa)  
Iowa Museum Association (IMA)  
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF)  
Iowa Native Plant Society  
Iowa Prairie Network  
Iowa Public Television  
Iowa State University Extension  
Iowa West Foundation (IWF)  
Lauritzen Gardens  
Learner's Edge Teacher Group  
Living Loess  
Lisa Marie Memorial Fund  
Loess Hills Alliance  
Mid Day Optimist Club, Council Bluffs  
Midwest Birding Symposium  
Midwest Environmental Education Conference  
Missouri Valley Booster Club  
Monarch Watch – University of Kansas  
MORE Nature (Metro Omaha Resources for Exploring Nature)  
National Association of Interpretation (NAI)  
National Park Service  
Nebraska ESU  
New Tree School  
Nishna Valley YMCA  
NRCS (East and West Pottawattamie County)  
Omaha Area Education Directors  
Omaha Astronomical Society  
Pottawattamie Arts Conservation Entertainment  
Pottawattamie County Bowmen  
Pottawattamie Conservation Foundation  
Pottawattamie County Community Foundation  
Raise Me to Read  
Rick Schmid  
Shelby County Conservation  
Scheels  
Target  
Trailblazers  
Union Pacific  
Western Historic Trails Center

## Partnerships—Schools:

AHSTW Community School District  
Blair Community Schools  
Blair Christian Academy  
Council Bluffs Community School District  
Council Bluffs Summer Exploration Program  
Creighton University  
Drake University  
Discovery Homeschool  
Glenwood Montessori Program  
Heartland Christian School  
HOPE Home School, Southwest Iowa  
Iowa Western Community College  
Iowa Western Community College Early Childhood Center  
Kiewit Middle School, Omaha  
Lewis Central Community School District  
Mary Our Queen, Omaha  
Metro Community College, Omaha  
Missouri Valley School District  
Missouri Valley High School Drama Department  
Omaha Christian Academy  
Omaha Home School Group  
Papillion LaVista High Ability Learner Program  
Riverside Community School District  
St. Gerald's, Omaha  
St. Paul's Lutheran Preschool Council Bluffs  
St. Paul Lutheran Preschool, Treynor  
St. Wenceslaus Elementary School, Omaha  
Treynor Community School District  
Tri-Center Community School District  
Underwood Community School District  
University of Nebraska (Lincoln/Omaha)  
Valley View Home School  
Westside Middle School Gifted and Talented Department





# Pottawattamie Conservation Education Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)

## Pottawattamie Conservation Environmental Education Numbers:

**276**

number of EE  
programs presented  
by PCCB EE staff

**84**

number of in-school  
programs this year

**18**

number of years  
Pottawattamie  
County Conservation  
Summer Camps  
offered

**3,491**

number of field  
trip participants  
at Pottawattamie  
County Parks

**6,981**

number of kids  
reached through  
in-school programs

**62,899**

participants reached  
by EE Programming  
since 2016



**3716**

Students reached  
through the  
PCF free  
field trip program  
since 2016

**10,029**

raptors counted on  
average from  
2002- 2018 at  
Hitchcock  
HawkWatch

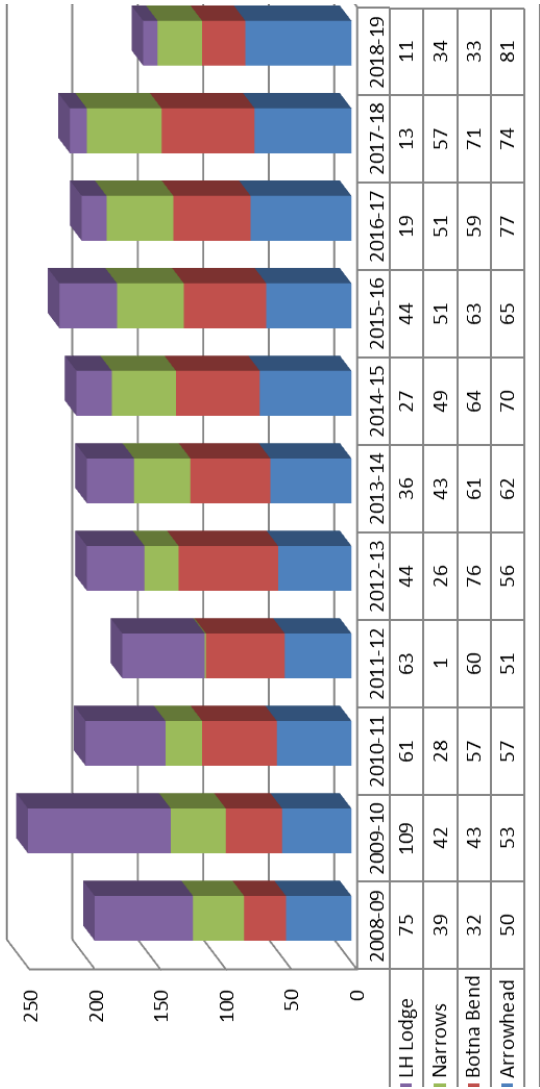
**19**

number of  
school districts  
served by field trip  
programs, including  
Pottawattamie  
County and Greater  
Omaha Metro.

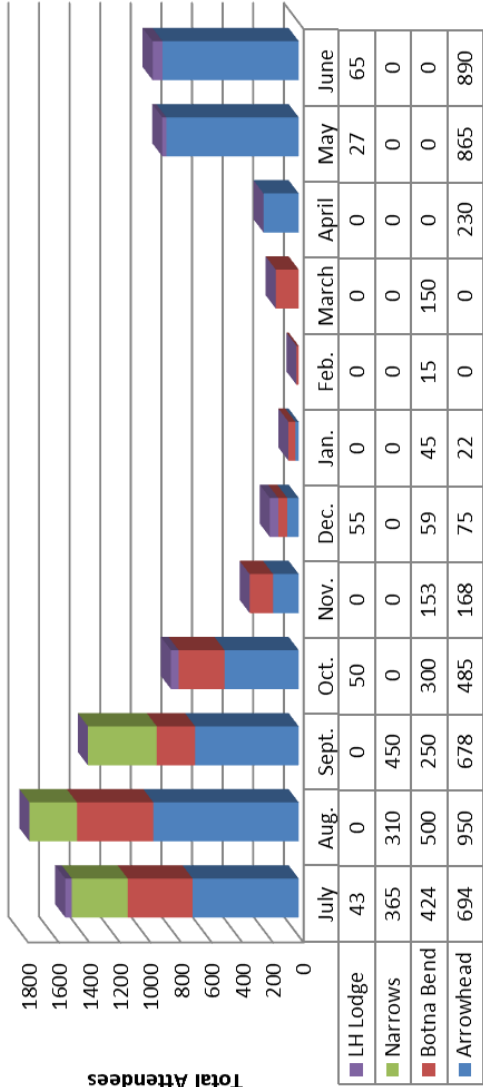


Mud due to flooding inside Olsen Lodge at Botna Bend

Lodge & Shelter Rentals



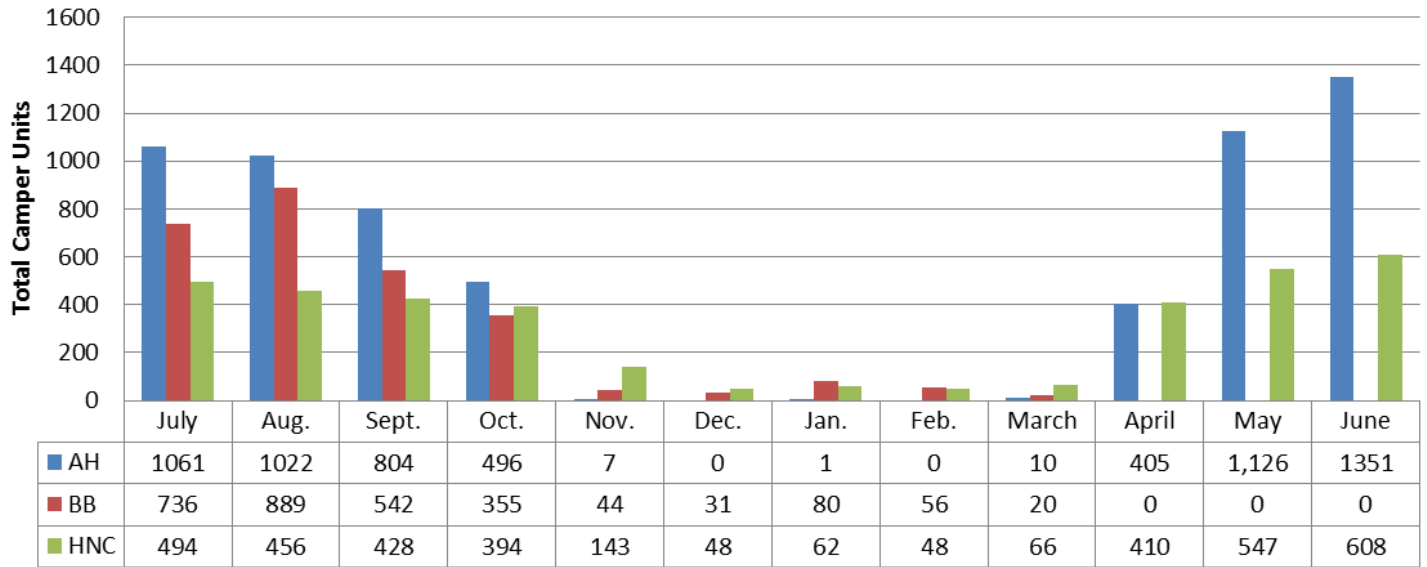
2018/2019 Lodge & Shelter Rental Attendees



Prescribed fire outside the Loess Hill Lodge at Hitchcock

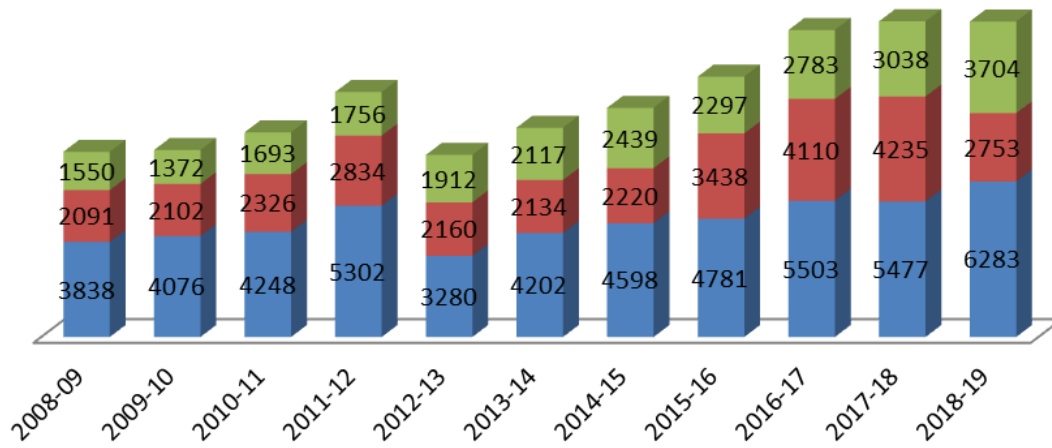


## 2018/2019 Total Camping Units

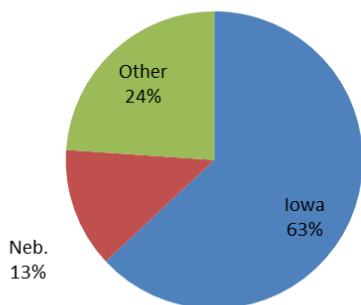


## Total Camper Count

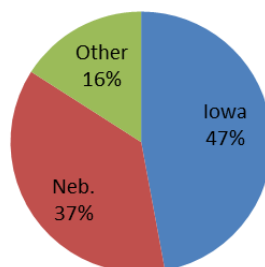
■ Arrowhead ■ Botna Bend ■ Hitchcock



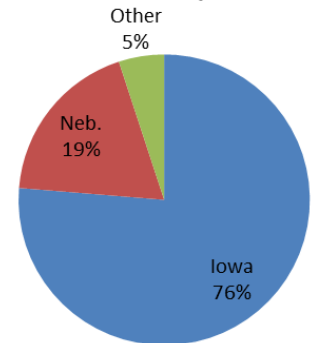
Arrowhead Camper Breakdown



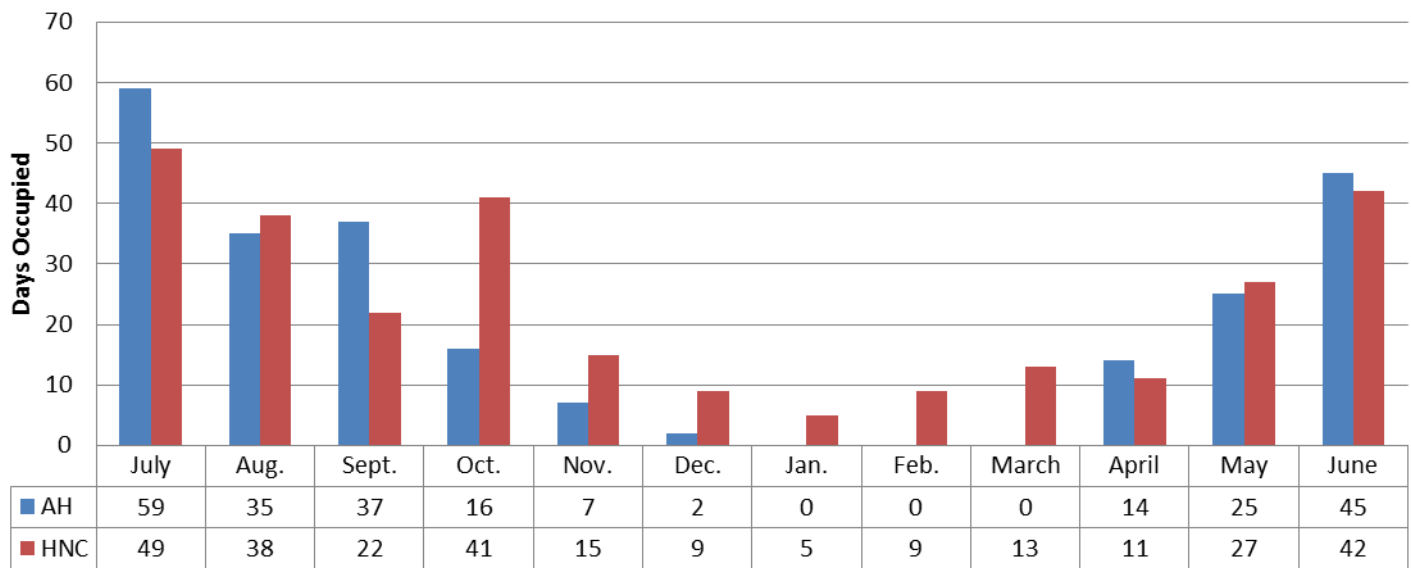
Hitchcock Nature Center Camper Breakdown



Botna Bend Park Camper Breakdown

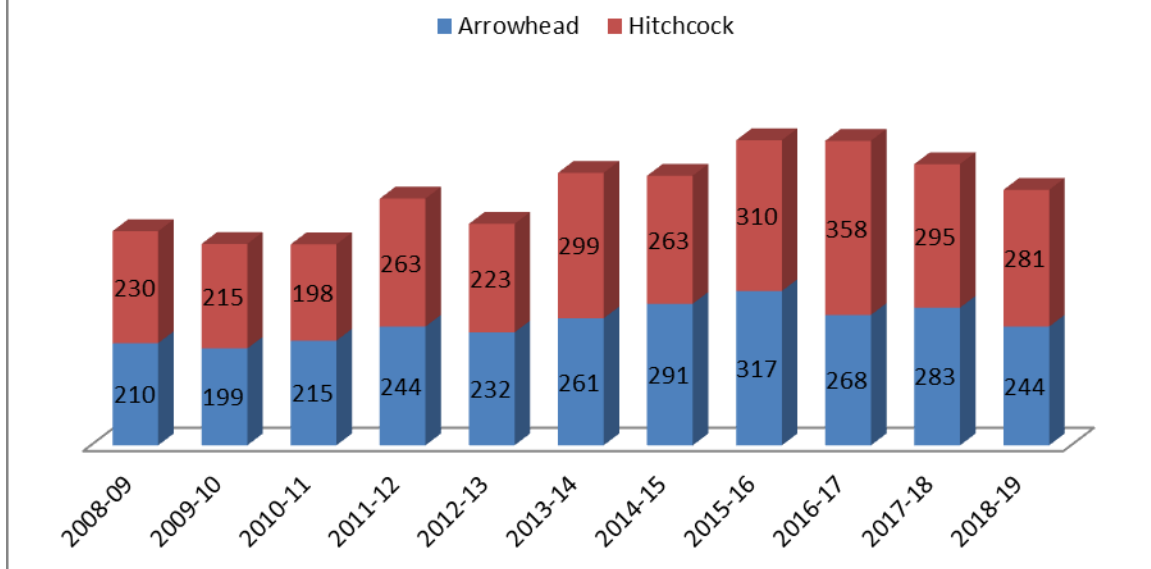


## 2018/2019 Cabin Use

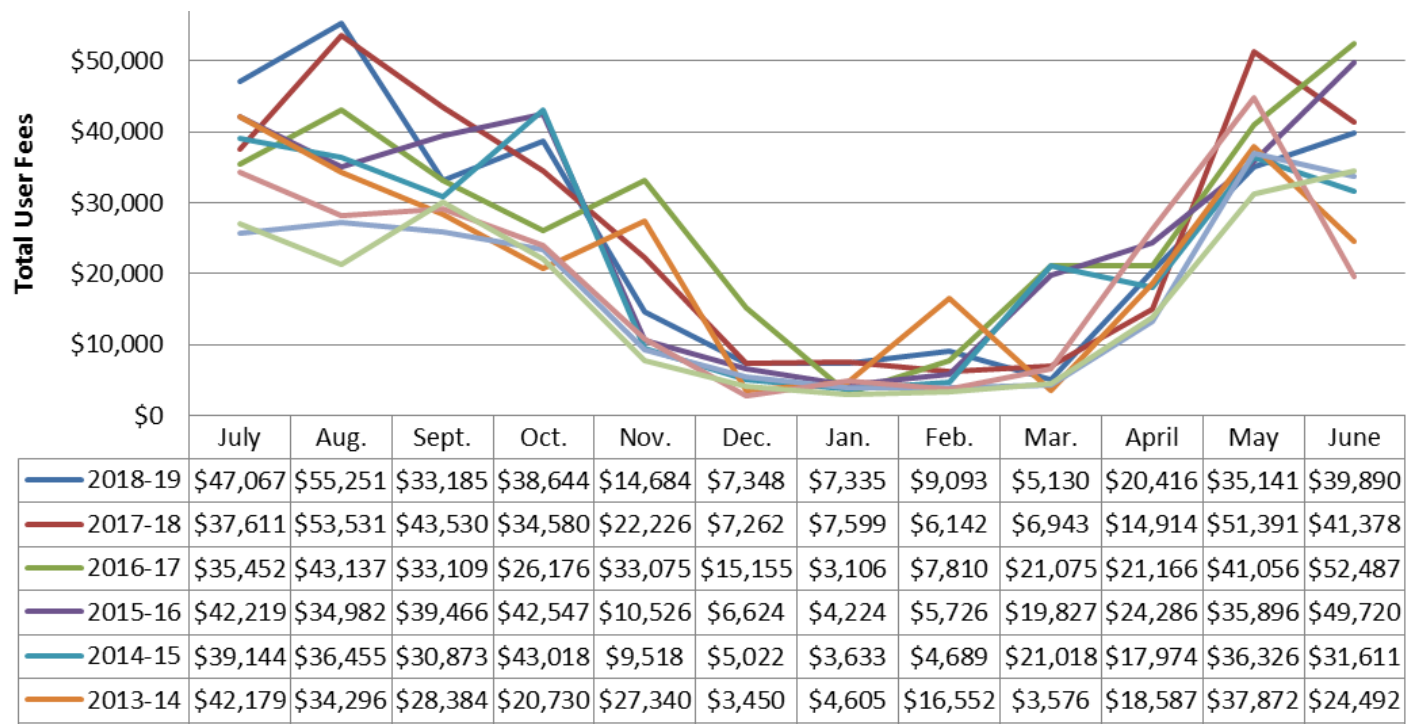


Sugar Shack at Botna Bend to process maple sap to syrup

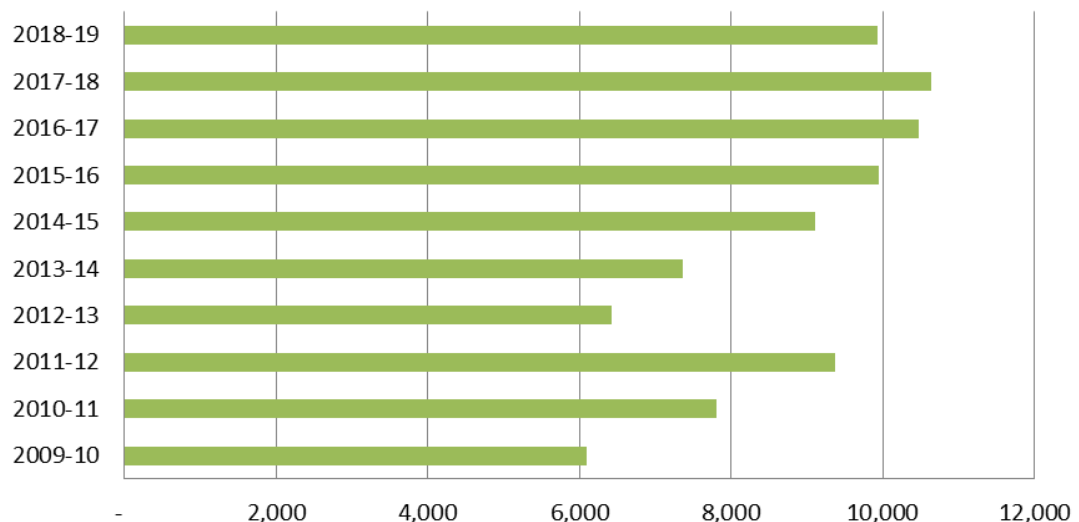
## Total Cabin Occupancy







## Lodge Visitors



	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Lodge Visitors	6,095	7,804	9,378	6,433	7,370	9,116	9,951	10,474	10,632	9,932