

Scott County Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Plan

2025

REAP Plan Committee

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I. Introduction and Background of REAP

A. Background of REAP in Iowa

Over the years, intense use of Iowa's natural resources has resulted in serious depletion of the resource base. Public information underscoring the losses led to the statewide effort known as the REAP (Resource Enhancement And Protection) Program to prevent further damage and enhance the resources that remain.

The formation of the REAP Program established a long-term effort to wisely use and protect the state's natural resources. It provides a structure and funding for acquisition and management of public lands, upgrading park and preserve facilities, environmental education, roadside vegetation improvements, and historical preservation projects. Through REAP, all Iowans can become more aware of man's interaction with nature and work to enhance and preserve it.

REAP's unique structure and funding enables it to accomplish its broad mission through participation by local governments,

individuals, government agencies, and conservation groups. The law requires counties to form planning committees, identify priorities, develop a funding plan, and review the proposed projects. Beginning in 1990 and continuing in even numbered years, regional COG (Council of Government) sub-areas throughout Iowa elect five representatives to serve on the statewide REAP Congress. The REAP Act requires the Congress to meet biennially to discuss the program's purpose, review the regulations, and recommend necessary changes.

REAP funds are programmed into the categories shown in Table 1 based on percentages specified by state law. Since 1989, entities in Scott County have received over \$5 million in REAP funding. For more information about the history of REAP in Iowa and historical funding data, please visit the of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources website (www.iowadnr.gov).

Table 1: REAP Fund Allocation

Category	Percent of Allocation
State Open Space	28%
County Conservation	20%
Soil and Water Enhancement	20%
City Parks and Open Space	15%
State Land Management	9%
Historical Resources	5%
Roadside Vegetation	3%
Environmental Education	First \$350,000 of each year
DNR Administration	1%

Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 2018

B. Purpose of the Scott County REAP Plan

The *Scott County REAP Plan's* major objective is to compile the resource enhancement and protection needs and priorities of the local governments, educational institutions, nonprofit agencies, and conservation groups into one document. It includes a summary resource inventory, discussion of current issues, a statement of goals and objectives, and a plan of action.

Like much of Iowa, Scott County's resources are threatened by persistent development pressures. In a heavily urbanized area, land and natural resources are coveted for many uses. The *Scott County REAP Plan* will improve the effort to enhance and protect the natural and cultural resources.

C. Scott County REAP Goals

As part of the resource enhancement and protection mission, the following goals are

to be used in decision making to foster sustainable conservation practices. Are development or resource projects consistent with these goals? If they are not, are there opportunities to mitigate development effects to reduce severity and prevent loss of habitat or quality of the environment?

1. **Promote Sustainability.** Full and appropriate development, preservation, or restoration of existing natural, sensitive, and historic areas; pathways; parks; habitats; and soil and water resources will be promoted to gain complete benefit from them in an environmental, social, and economic measure.
2. **Acquire Suitable Land.** Opportunities will be sought to acquire property that fits in well with existing resources and fulfills the action plans of various public and private entities.

3. **Promote Appropriate Conservation.** Conservation activities will be promoted through appropriate means in order to protect and enhance the soil, water, and timber resources.
4. **Use Environmental Education.** Support environmental educational programs and facilities that will be developed to provide students, professionals, and the general public access to knowledge about the environment and related issues i.e. recycling, climate change, land use issues, and energy usage.
5. **Advocate Benefits of REAP Program.** Support will be given to legislation that provides additional funding for REAP, other conservation and environmental programs, and specific projects benefitting the state and the county.
6. **Encourage Cooperation.** Inter-entity cooperation on all REAP activities and projects will be encouraged as much as possible.
7. **Leverage Funding Sources.** All available sources of funding will be utilized, such as general revenues, grants, borrowing, and gifts to supplement REAP dollars for projects, as well as REAP dollars to leverage other funding sources.
8. **Review REAP Plan Regularly.** A five-year review of local REAP priorities and needs will be done, along with amendments to the plan as necessary.

II. Overview of Scott County Resources

Scott County is a 458-square mile political subdivision located in eastern Iowa along the Mississippi River. It is part of the Quad Cities Metropolitan Area, with Davenport as the largest city. The 2020 Decennial Census counts the population of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as 384,324, which includes Henry, Mercer, and Rock Island Counties, Illinois and Scott County, Iowa. Within the county are 16 incorporated cities and several unincorporated areas. Map 1 shows Scott County's location in Iowa.

The river and land features strongly influenced the form and pattern of growth

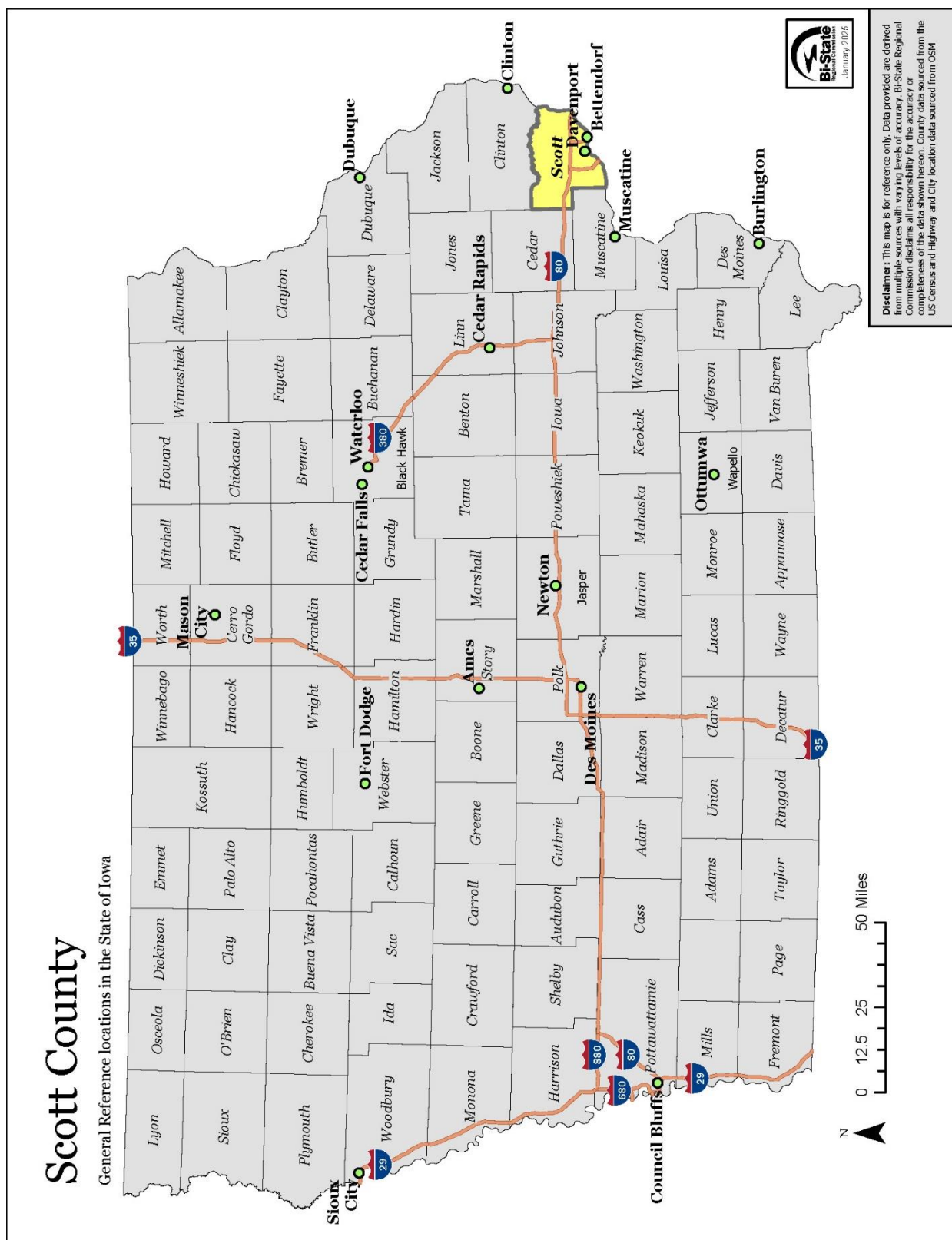
and development in Scott County. The Mississippi and the Wapsipinicon Rivers comprise a significant portion of the county's boundary. Gently rolling hills with well-developed drainage patterns and small, isolated areas with steep inclines characterize much of the county's landscape. Small areas of alluvial bottomlands are located along the Mississippi, while bottomlands and a river terrace can be found along the Wapsipinicon River. About half of the water in the county drains directly into the Mississippi River and the other half drains into the Wapsipinicon River, which reaches

the Mississippi River at the northeastern corner of the county.

Early settlements began on the floodplain of the Mississippi River because it provided a

source of water, power for industry, and transportation to areas up and down the river. The county's rich soil made intensive farming of the land productive and profitable.

Map 1: Scott County Location in Iowa

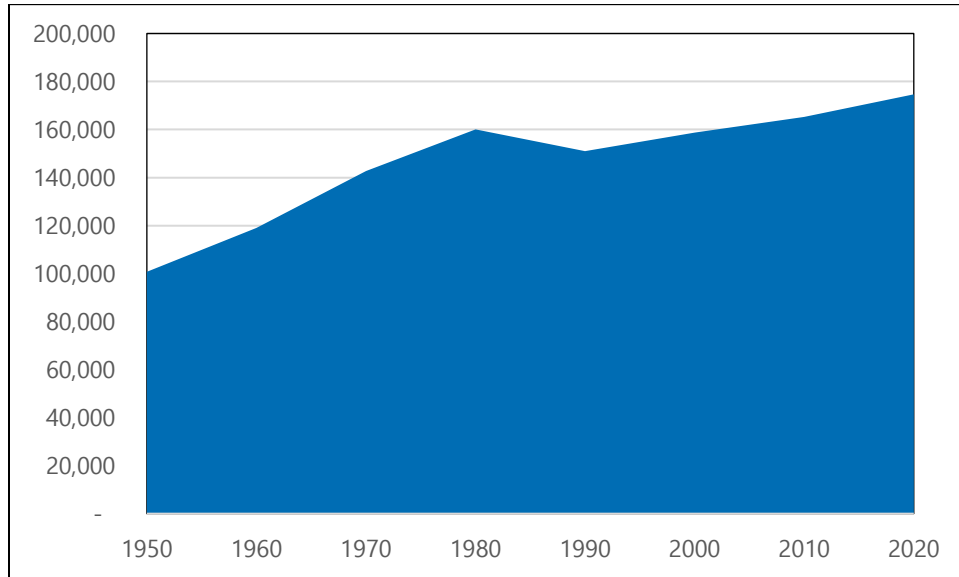


A. Human Resources

Population Distribution and Trends

Scott County's current population has increased 5.7% from the 2010 Census, growing from 165,224 to 174,669. The trend of growth is expected to continue into the future. Figure 1 illustrates the trends in Scott County's population growth since 1980.

Figure 1: Scott County Population 1950-2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1950-2020.

Although Scott County's average 2020 population per square mile was 381.4, it varied widely by township, as can be seen in Table 2. The uneven population distribution affects decisions about resource activities. For instance, the heavy concentration of people in Davenport is a resource demand factor. Likewise, the lightly populated areas in rural Scott County may mean resources can more easily be preserved in this area. The percent change from 2010 to 2020 also shows that many of the more rural areas of Scott County have decreased in population, despite an overall population increase.

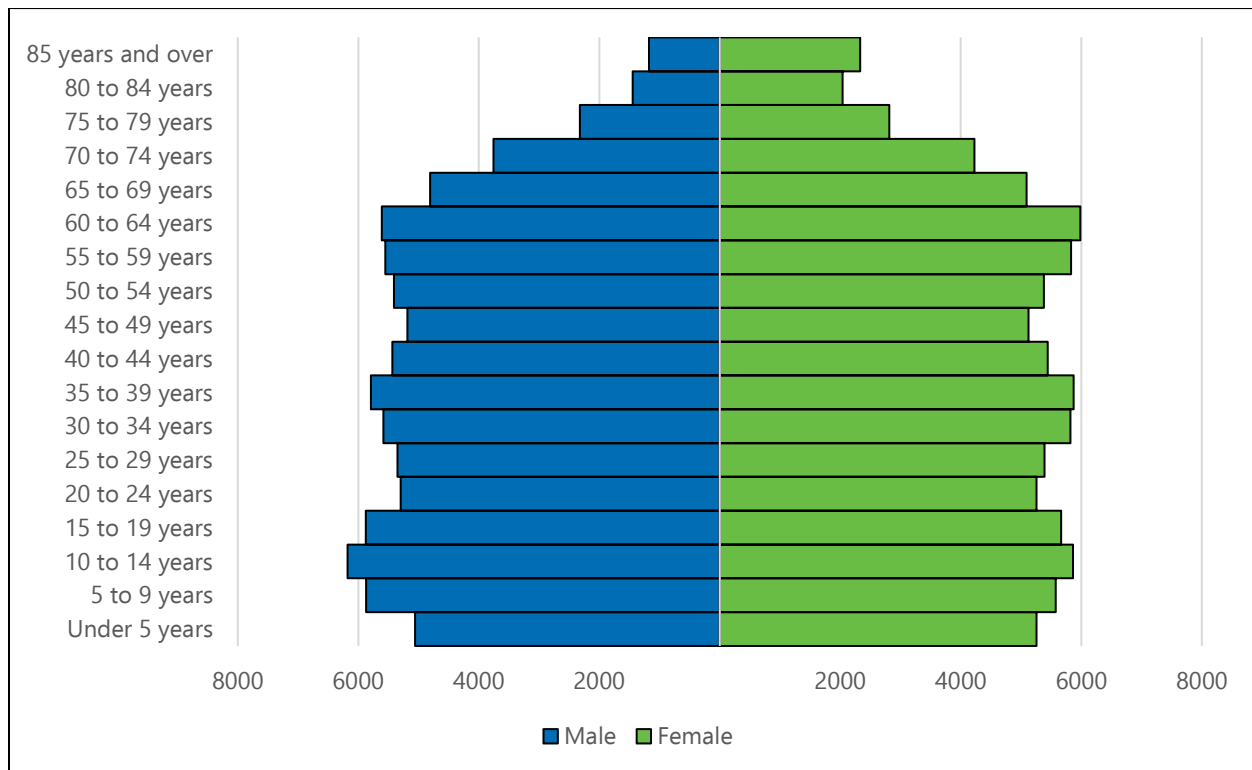
Table 2: Population by Township

	2010	2020	Percent Change (2010-2020)
Allens Grove	1,022	961	-6.0%
Blue Grass	4,006	3,552	-11.3%
Buffalo	4,892	4,965	+1.5%
Butler	3,638	3,767	+3.5%
Cleona	464	419	-9.7%
Davenport	99,685	101,724	+2.0%
Hickory Grove	649	629	-3.1%
LeClaire	5,335	6,304	+18.2%
Liberty	733	656	-10.5%
Lincoln	553	498	-9.9%
Pleasant Valley	34,936	40,886	+17.0%
Princeton	1,405	1,387	-1.3%
Sheridan	6,213	7,194	+15.8%
Winfield	1,693	1,727	+2.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2010-2020.

Figure 2 shows the current age distribution of Scott County. A population pyramid is an important tool for making informed decisions about the needs of the population for the present and the future. Specifically, Figure 2 illustrates the growing population of Scott County's Baby Boomer generation, which is an indicator of the potential increase in demand for recreation services for seniors in the near future. Scott County's median age as of the 2020 Decennial Census was 39.0, an increase from 37.7 in 2010.

Figure 2: Scott County Population Pyramid



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2020.

B. Cultural/Historic Resources

Scott County boasts a rich array of cultural and historical amenities, as well as opportunities beyond the political boundary because it is part of the Quad Cities Metropolitan Area with the historic and cultural assets of Arsenal Island in Rock Island, Illinois among other area attractions. Important cultural facilities in the county include the Figge Art Museum, Putnam Museum and Science Center, German American Heritage Center, Family Museum, and Buffalo Bill Museum. The following is a list of selected historical places and sites as found on the Scott County National Register.

- Ambrose Hall (St. Ambrose College) – Located in Davenport. Built in 1885.
- Bix Beiderbecke House – Located in Davenport. Built in 1903, and boyhood home of noted jazz musician. A festival in his name is held each year during the last week in July.
- Joseph F. Bettendorf House – Located in Bettendorf. Built in 1884.
- Bettendorf-Washington School Building – Located in Bettendorf. Built in 1909.
- James Brown House – Located in Riverdale. Built in 1842.
- Buffalo High School Building – Located in Buffalo. Built in 1900.

- Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Freight House – Located in Davenport. Built in 1917, and home to the Freight House Farmer's Market indoor/outdoor market.
- Cody Homestead – Located in McCausland. Built in 1847 and boyhood home of Buffalo Bill until the family moved to Kansas Territory in 1854.
- Cody Road Historic District – Located in LeClaire. Built in 1850. Birthplace of Buffalo Bill Cody.
- Community Building – Located in Princeton. Built in 1928.
- Davenport City Hall – Located in Davenport. Built in 1894.
- Lock and Dam No. 14 Historic District – Located in Pleasant Valley. Built in 1922.
- Vander Veer Park Historic District – Located in Davenport. Built 1875-1949.

C. Natural Resources

The *Scott County REAP Plan* is a document specifically addressing resource conservation, enhancement, and protection within the county political boundary. There are other plans approved by the county or by the cities that also support the mission of REAP, including, but not limited to the *Scott County Comprehensive Plan* and *Scott County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan*, as well as individual community comprehensive plans and parks and recreation plans. Each provide various references related to natural resources within Scott County that can supplement the REAP plan.

Soils. Soils in Scott County were formed by three main forces that reflect the results of glacial and post-glacial activity. The three forces include glacial drift; alluvial (water-deposited) action; and windblown, silt-like (loess) soil movement. The loess soils regime is generally 25-30 feet or more in depth and covers a majority of the county's land area. Alluvial deposits are found along the river lowlands, while glacial drift materials are located mainly in the northern part of the county.

Tama soils and the Muscatine-Tama-Garwin association, covering about 60 percent of the county's land areas, are highly suited to corn (average yields are 150 bushels per acre) and other row crops. The main management concern is erosion control. Soils occupying hilly slopes, the Downs-Fayette association, are productive, but need to be managed for fertility as well as erosion. All soils in the county are susceptible to wind and water erosion and need to be protected through appropriate means. Education regarding best farming practices is a key factor in preventing soil erosion due to agricultural activities. In the urban areas, stormwater management best practices reduce soil erosion due to runoff from developments.

Water Resources. Water resources include lakes, wetlands, streams, and rivers. Five large streams flow directly into the Mississippi River. They are the Wapsipinicon River, Spencer Creek, Crow Creek, Duck Creek, and Blackhawk Creek.

Smaller streams such as the Rock Creek, Martin Creek, Jones Creek, Walnut Creek, Mud Creek, Mason Creek, McDonald Creek, and Lost Creek drain into the Wapsipinicon River.

Scott County has two major inland lakes; Lost Grove Lake, which is 450 acres, and West Lake Park with a combined surface area of 110 acres. There are also a few small, shallow ponds, but most have limited public access, as they are privately owned.

Wetlands in the county are generally former lakes, low lying areas near lakes, and wide drainage-ways along streams or rivers. Wetlands are prime waterfowl and game production areas. As a result, they are popular hunting sites.

Vegetation. Prior to the arrival of settlers, the vegetation in Scott County was mainly tall grass prairie with forests along the rivers and creeks. Since then, agricultural and commercial purposes have altered the vegetation in most areas except along the Wapsipinicon River, the bluffs found along the Mississippi River, and the stream valleys throughout the county. There are other areas in Scott County containing natural

vegetation, but these are primarily small scattered concentrations in private woodlots and creek valleys.

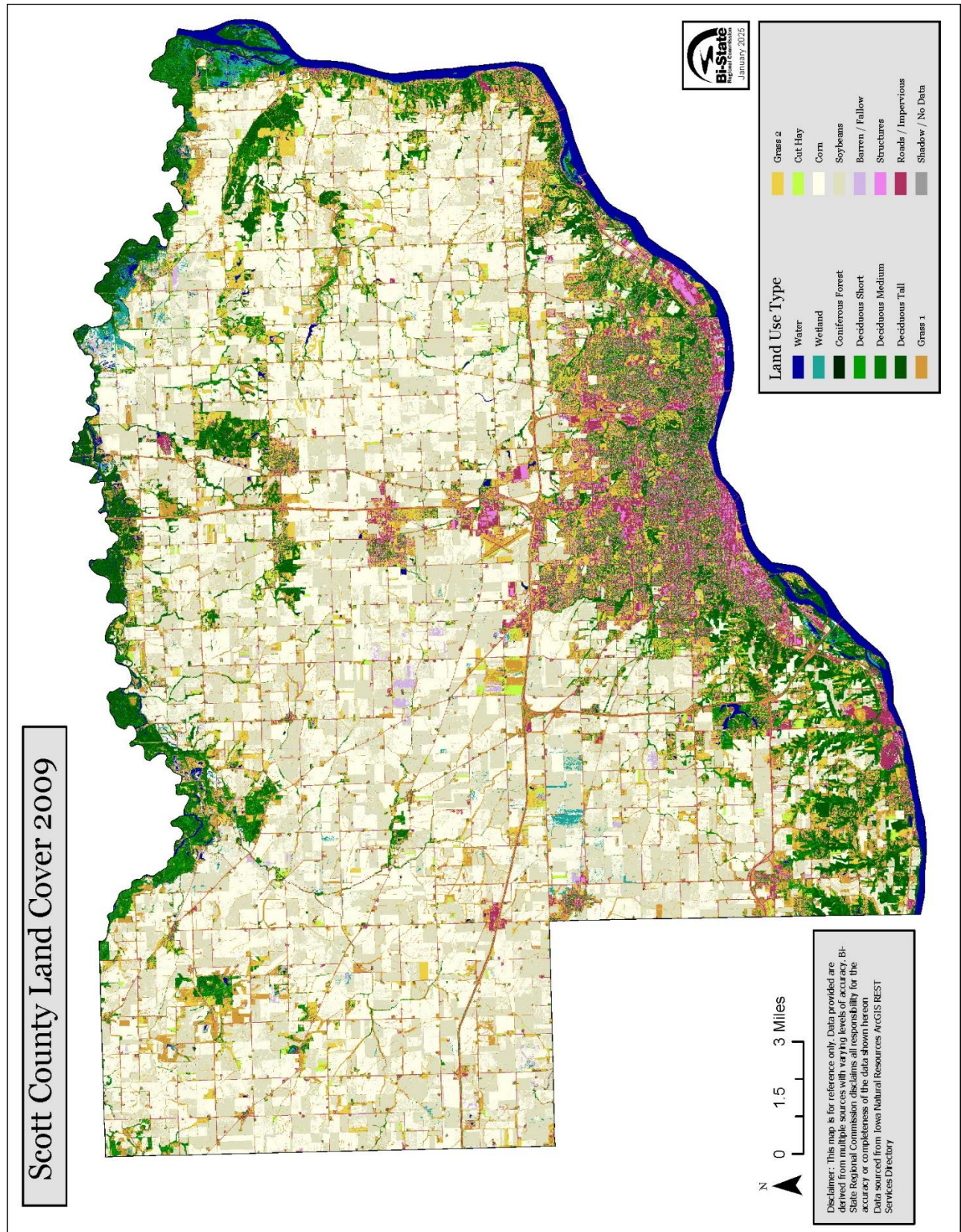
Lowland tree vegetation consists of willows, cottonwood, river birch, maple, elm, walnut, and hackberry. Upland forested areas contain oak, hickories, linden, wild and black cherry, elm, and American ash.

Predominant upland grasses are switch grass, bluestem, Indian grass, cord grass, wild rye, June grass, prairie and bird foot violets, shooting star, and stiff golden rod. Marsh grasses are mainly cattails, edges, reed grass, red top, and slough grass.

Natural areas provide opportunities for low-intensity recreation, such as hiking and nature photography. They also serve as sites for environmental education through which persons acquire a first-hand understanding of the natural world. Undisturbed natural areas serve as refuges to protect the diversity of plants and animals, some of which undoubtedly have values yet unknown for medicine, agriculture, and industry.

Map 2 depicts the various land uses throughout Scott County.

Map 2: Land Use



Wildlife. Wildlife is varied throughout the county. Natural areas provide the best sites for wildlife. Important fur-bearing animals include mink, muskrat, coyote, raccoon, fox, beaver, and skunk. Other common animals include rabbit, squirrel, opossum, white-tailed deer, ground hog, and a variety of rodents, reptiles, and amphibians.

Numerous types of fish such as carp, buffalo channel catfish, walleye, northern pike, largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, sucker, sturgeon, perch, and bullhead are found in the rivers and lakes.

Scott County is a prime winter feeding and migrating route for bald eagles. Other birds in the area consist of tree swallows, sparrows, blackbirds, cardinals, orioles, bluebirds, chickadees, finches, morning and turtle doves, and wrens. Woodpeckers, cedar wax wings, owls, purple martins, blue jays, ringneck pheasants, quail, partridge, and hawks can also be found in the area.

Because the area is in the Mississippi flyway, during the spring and fall, thousands of geese, teal, wood ducks, and other waterfowl migrate through the valley nesting along the river banks and the river islands. Several wildlife refuges have been established to provide the necessary habitat for waterfowl.

Following is a list of the federally-protected plants and animals (as of January 2025) in Scott County.

- Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake
- Higgins eye clam
- Indiana bat

- Northern Long-Eared bat
- Tricolored Bat
- Sheepnose mussel
- Spectaclecase mussel
- Rusty Patched Bumble Bee
- Monarch Butterfly
- Western Regal Fritillary
- Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid

D. Parks and Recreation Facilities and Open Space

County recreation resources consist of a mixture of natural and park areas that provide a balance in recreational opportunities, such as picnicking, hunting, hiking, cycling, fishing, and nature watching. Parks and Recreation in Scott County is organized both at the county and city level. Below are brief descriptions of the major parks and recreation services within Scott County, as well as links to specific organizational websites.

[Scott County Conservation Board](#)

The Scott County Conservation Board (established 1956) was one of the first county conservation boards to be organized in Iowa. Board members are charged with the responsibility of conserving the natural resources of the county, preserving scenic and historic sites, and developing recreational facilities for the residents of the county and tourists to enjoy. A complete list of Scott County parks can be found on the Conservation Board website

(<https://www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/conservation-board>).

City of Davenport

Davenport parks and recreation facilities include a multitude of green spaces, riverfront facilities, and amenities for users of all ages. Since 1989, Davenport has received approximately \$1,153,076 in REAP funds for city parks and open space.

City of Bettendorf

The mission statement of Bettendorf's Parks and Recreation Department is "To provide recreational opportunities that enrich the quality of life for all." Since 1989, Bettendorf has received approximately \$940,190 in REAP funds for city parks and open space. A complete list of Bettendorf park and recreation facilities can be found on the city's

Regional Trails

Scott County is connected to the Quad Cities' regional trail network, made up of over 130 miles of walking and biking trails. The Iowa portion of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) extends from west Davenport to Bettendorf, with a section of off-road, paved trail in Buffalo as well. The MRT is part of a greater national network of more than 3,000 miles, spanning the entire length of the Mississippi River. The riverfront portion of the trail also connects to the American Discovery Trail, an east-west network of coast-to-coast trails spanning over 6,800 miles and 15 states. For more information on specific trails, please visit [QCTrails.org](https://www.qctrails.org).

Nahant Marsh

In 1994, it was discovered that hunting had created a lead poisoning problem at Nahant Marsh, just off the Mississippi River near Credit Island, that had been used as a sportsman's club. The marsh was declared a Superfund Site by the EPA in 1999, and a cleanup was sponsored by the EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife. In 2001, the City of Davenport was awarded \$112,000 in REAP funds to improve Nahant Marsh. Since 2000, Nahant Marsh has been maintained as a nature preserve and education center and is one of the largest urban wetlands on the Upper Mississippi.

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

Located along the Wapsipinicon River, the Environmental Education Center is made up of 225 acres of forests, grasslands, and wetlands. Regular environmental educational programs are held for school groups, special interest groups, and the general public, making the Center a valuable educational tool for Scott County and the region at large. Other recreation activities include hunter education courses, an outdoor amphitheater, campsites, and rental facilities. A full list of facilities can be found on the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center page of Scott County Conservation's website (<https://www.scottcountyia.com/conservation/wapsi>).

III. Issues in Scott County

A. Environmental and Development Issues

Various environmental issues are of particular concern in Scott County, though these issues are hardly unique to the county and are widely seen at the state and national levels. Issues identified by the Scott County REAP Committee include:

- **Storm water retention.** As development increases throughout Scott County, areas of storm water retention (grasslands and other natural areas) decrease. This can cause larger issues, such as flooding and damage to sewer systems.
- **Declining woodlands and natural areas.** Loss of woodland and natural areas as a result of growth and development can lead to the encroachment of wildlife habitats, threatening the diversity of the local ecosystem. The USDA Forest Service reported in a 2013 Forest Inventory

Analysis that Iowa's woodland acreage had shrunk for the first time since 1974, with tree clearings on the rise.

B. Educational Issues

A decline in environmental education can largely be attributed to lack of funding and/or resources. With many school districts facing issues of school closures and overcrowding, environmental education often falls by the wayside. It is particularly important to be able to educate children from an early age about the natural resources issues mentioned above, as well as issues relating to climate change and the changing environment. Environmental education is a critical part of the county's overall REAP program and should be a focus at the county and city level going forward.

IV. Scott County REAP Plan and Implementation Program

Roles and Responsibilities in Scott County

County

Scott County is responsible for providing recreation opportunities for residents living within the county. Because it is a heavily urbanized area, the county has developed a wide range of activities for its citizens. In addition, it is responsible for developing park preserves that provide habitat for wildlife and enable humans to interact with nature. Park, recreation, and open space in the county totals approximately 2,500 acres (not including park and open space in the metropolitan area). As the county's trailways, parks, and scenic/cultural assets are developed, the area should continue to be enhanced as a tourist destination.

Municipalities

The 16 cities located in the county have a responsibility to provide appropriate recreation and open space facilities to suit the population of their communities. Currently, the county provides over 8,000 acres of recreation/open space areas. Davenport and Bettendorf, the two largest cities, have approximately 3,500 acres and 950 acres in their respective cities for recreation and open space activities.

Regional Agencies

Bi-State Regional Commission, the regional planning agency serving Scott County, is a

regional data center and serves as a forum to discuss and develop regional plans. Bi-State also coordinates planning activities and development efforts, eliminating duplication and incompatible development and land use. The REAP plan is a prime example of the efforts undertaken by the Commission. The Commission reflects the ideas and opinions of its members that support the protection and enhancement of resource areas that provide a variety of recreation opportunities for all citizens in the region.

State/Federal

The State of Iowa and the federal government are responsible for protecting unique natural areas, developing wildlife preserves, and enhancing sites that are historically or geologically interesting. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Department of the Interior have responsibilities to buy and manage land for the benefit of wildlife protection and recreation activities. The DNR currently oversees four Wildlife Management Areas in Scott County, including 1,753 acres in Davenport, 168 acres in McCausland, and 1,187 acres in Princeton. Federally-owned lands, including game preserves, total approximately 2,000 acres in Scott County.

Private Groups

Private individuals, businesses, and conservation groups are key players in the protection and enhancement of the environment. Governmental agencies cannot meet every need in the realm of land acquisition and habitat development, nor can they be aware of every issue. Input from conservation groups is vital to the county's overall planning focus and work plan.

Scott County Conservation Board

Goals:

1. Fully develop and protect existing vital natural resources and recreational lands within the county.
2. Expand the environmental educational opportunities for county residents.
3. Strategically acquire a variety of resource lands that can be placed under the county's resource management program.
4. Cooperate with all other groups and entities involved in the REAP process.
5. Lobby the state; support and cooperate in its enhancement and protection of significant local resources.
6. Act as the lead agency in gathering information about REAP and inform/educate local officials about the program.

Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and Water Conservation District

Goals:

1. Act to encourage sound land management practices that slow soil erosion by utilizing government programs and education efforts to assist farmers in the best available management practices.
2. Act to encourage the conversion of as much marginal cropland as possible to other more compatible uses by formalizing the conversion targets and publicizing them to area landowners.
3. Act to encourage the development of small ponds (farms) that can serve as a county water system, thereby slowing the movement of water and soil out of the county, by informing the area landowners about the government programs available to assist in pond development.

Conservation Groups

Goal:

Support and/or cooperate in the enhancement and protection of a wide variety of resources and efforts to furnish a wide range of quality recreational opportunities for area residents.

Municipalities

Goals:

1. Develop a variety of recreation and open space areas within the respective municipalities to

adequately serve the needs of all residents.

2. Acquire lands as needed in order to fulfill the recreation/open space needs of the respective community's citizens.
3. Emphasize the enhancement or development of unique resource opportunities in the communities.
4. Cooperate with other entities in achieving the REAP goals.

A cooperative approach between the private

groups, government agencies, the county, and municipalities may be possible in land acquisition efforts, environmental education, and fundraising activities. Cooperation between Scott County, surrounding counties, and the state is also encouraged. The Scott County REAP Committee meets on an annual basis in order to review projects submitted for potential REAP funding and to reaffirm REAP related goals in the county. A five-year review and update is recommended for the *Scott County REAP Plan*.