



2020-2023 Strategic Plan

712 South Highway 6, Oakland, Iowa 51560

Our mission:

Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development's mission is to collaboratively lead cultural and conservation projects to improve quality of life in rural western Iowa.

Our core values:

As a not-for-profit, our work must be led by a set of core values that our Board and staff live by everyday as we do the important work of developing cultural and conservation projects in rural western Iowa. In all we do, our organization will be:

- **Collaborative** – creating partnerships and developing diverse alliances to collectively inspire and create regional impact in all we do.
- **Locally-Focused** – to support and place our commitment first in support of our neighbors, locally-led groups, natural resource assets and our local economies.
- **Educational** – teaching and building information so that our citizens can create projects that will improve our quality of life
- **Transparent** – respecting that people should know all the information in order to make great decisions and build integrity and honesty in our local systems

Our priorities

- Robust outdoor recreation and rural tourism
- Rural culture as a venue for rural economic development
- Flood resilient communities and improved water quality
- Stewardship of the Loess Hills of Western Iowa and its ecosystems

RC&D Area Overview:

The Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is a not for profit 501(c)(3) organization authorized in 1981 that encompasses 3,016,320 acres or approximately 4,712 square miles. The RC&D area includes the southwest Iowa counties of Harrison, Shelby, Cass, Pottawattamie, Mills, Montgomery, Page and Fremont.

The Golden Hills website www.goldenhillsrcd.org serves as an informational source for the RC&D and the projects operated through Golden Hills or maintained cooperatively with organizations that serve the communities and citizens of western Iowa.

Organizational Capacity

Board Governance

Objective:

GHRCD will strategically prioritize projects and programs to fulfill its mission and vision while remaining responsive to current regional needs in conservation and rural development

Strategies:

1. Review proposed mission and vision statements and make adjustments as necessary.
2. Collectively develop a broad vision for the region and evaluate annually.
3. Develop an evaluation process and policy to determine whether a project or opportunity fits within our scope and is financially and/or programmatically feasible

Staff Development

Objective:

GHRCD will strive for collaborative staff and board leadership through cultivating relationships and improving internal communication

Strategies:

1. Hold an annual retreat to focus on team building and leadership; create networking opportunities between board and staff; hold monthly staff meetings
2. Revise the current employee handbook and review annually; create plans for staff succession and contingency;
3. Inventory staff and board skills as part of evaluation and annual review; facilitate opportunities for those skills to be used and/or developed; create job descriptions for all staff
4. Create a GH advisory council, with no decision making abilities, that will provide guidance on regional opportunities, needs and partnerships

Funding

Objective: GH will diversify its funding sources to create long term sustainability

Strategies:

1. Implement a fund development campaign to coincide with the 40th anniversary in 2021
2. Develop a prospect database from current stakeholders, Board contacts and prospect research
3. Expand fee for service opportunities – fiscal management, grant writing, group facilitation, training, marketing
4. Maintain current grant funding levels to sustain projects and initiatives
5. Explore investment opportunities

Marketing and Outreach

Objective: To increase awareness of Golden Hills RC&D projects, resources and initiatives while cultivating partnership opportunities through a comprehensive branding and communications

Strategies:

1. Develop a comprehensive marketing plan, using frequent media outreach to highlight programs and organizational success;
2. Develop and promote the annual report; 40th anniversary promotion
3. Create visibility for staff in collaborative meetings and projects.
4. Actively engage other organizations and community groups in projects and initiatives.
5. Refine the mission and vision into a 3 minute “elevator speech”
6. Redesign our website and outreach materials;
7. Develop an annual community recognition event for stakeholders;
8. Consistent logo use

INITIATIVE PRIORITIES

Natural Resource Protection & Stewardship

Goal: Strengthen the rural economy through land and water conservation, protection and enhancement of unique areas

Objective 1) Assist and participate with the Loess Hills Development & Conservation Authority

Strategy A. Facilitate the Authority meetings, projects, communication, business and assist in audit preparations

Objective 2) Facilitate infrastructure protection, improve water quality and protect farmland through the Hungry Canyons Alliance

Strategy A. Assist the HCA with Project Director duties as necessary to maintain focus on Federal and State appropriations to track funding levels

Strategy B. Attend HCA quarterly meetings and executive Committee meetings

Strategy C. Facilitate and complete 5 county HCA structures per year as funding allows

Objective 3) Participate on watershed development and watershed Leadership Teams as requested. Offer services to watershed planning, grant writing and implementation- as requested/needed.

Rural Place Making & Tourism

Objective: 1) Assist the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway Council in implementation of four action items from the revised Corridor Management Plan.

Strategy A. Continual updates of the Corridor Management Plan – Revised 2016

Strategy B. Assist with funding and coordination assistance as requested, to pursue development of an interpretive and research center for archeological resources specific to the Glenwood Paleo-Indian culture within the Loess Hills

Strategy C. Complete 3 items from the Marketing Plan for the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway each year

Strategy D. Fund, design and create interpretive information for the public based on the 2015 Interpretive Master Plan

Strategy E. Apply and receive two National Historic Landmark designations for archaeological or historic sites in the Loess Hills.

Strategy F. Create, fund and maintain the Loess Hills Scenic Byway website with photos and stories

Strategy G. Participate in all Iowa's Byways Sustainability Project training opportunities and conferences by the Byway Council and the Program Director

Strategy H. Conduct LHNSB tour or plan and hold a Byway engagement event each year

Objective: 2) Assist the Western Skies Scenic Byway Council in implementation of four action items based on the Corridor Management Plan

Strategy A. Continual updates of the Corridor Management Plan – Completed 2017

Strategy B. Assist with funding and coordination assistance as requested, to pursue development of interpretive signage and amenity development within the byway corridor

Strategy C. Complete 3 items from the Marketing Plan for the Western Skies Scenic Byway each year

Strategy D. Fund, design and create interpretive information for the public based on the 2015 Interpretive Master Plan

Strategy E. Apply and receive two National Historic Landmark designations for archaeological or historic sites in the WSSB Corridor

Strategy F. Create, fund and maintain the Western Skies Scenic Byway website with photos and stories

Strategy G. Participate in all Iowa's Byways Sustainability Project training opportunities and conferences by the Byway Council and the Program Director

Strategy H. Conduct WSSB tour or plan and hold a Byway engagement event each year

Objective: 3) Assist the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway Council in implementation of four action items based on the Corridor Management Plan

Strategy A. Continual updates of the Corridor Management Plan

Strategy B. Assist with funding and coordination assistance as requested, to pursue development of interpretive signage and amenity development within the byway corridor

Strategy C. Complete 3 items from the Marketing Plan for the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway each year

Strategy D. Fund, design and create interpretive information for the public based on the 2015 Interpretive Master Plan

Strategy E. Create, fund and maintain the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway website with photos and stories

Strategy F. Participate in all Iowa's Byways Sustainability Project training opportunities and conferences by the Byway Council and the Program Director

Strategy G. Conduct Glacial Trail Scenic Byway tour or plan and hold a Byway engagement event each year

Conservation Stewardship

Goal: Promote best management practices for wise land use and water quality improvement

Objective: 1) Assist with the development and implementation of water quality plans through watershed planning or Source Water Planning teams within the eight county RC&D area

Strategy A. Lead the Source Water Protection team for a Phase II Plan for the cities of Malvern and Hastings in Mills County.

Strategy B. Assist the DNR with Phase I investigation and begin planning for Phase II Source Water Protection team.

Strategy C. Assist DNR with coordinating regional landowner, farm managers, county officials and county water manager training sessions on cover crop use and nutrient reduction strategies. 2015 and ongoing

Objective 2) Assist the Loess Hills Alliance to meet the objectives and priorities of the 2011 Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy A. Participate with the LHA Committees and provide technical and coordination support

Strategy B. Manage fiscal work of the Loess Hills Alliance.

Strategy C. Provide Board capacity building, outreach and organizational assistance to the LHA membership and executive committee

Objective 3) Adopt strategies and seek funding to implement projects for enhancement or protection of natural resources in the Loess Hills

Goal: Improve the quality and increase acres of wildlife habitat

Objective 1) Work with interested organizations to increase/improve wetlands – SWP Communities, PF and USFWS

Strategy A. Locate landowners wishing to improve their wetland habitat and expend funds provided by USFWS or other organizations

Objective 2) Facilitate the implementation of invasive species control & habitat management

Strategy A. Through partnerships, retain a prescribed fire practitioner in the Loess Hills

Strategy B. Explore and acquire additional cost share or other means for landowners in the Loess Hills to control invasive species and promote reclamation or protection of prairies, oak savannahs and pollinator habitat

Objective 3) Assist in acquisition of parcels to add to the Loess Hills State Forest or other state owned properties: Partners- DNR, TNC, CCB's, Archaeology Conservancy

Strategy A. Explore other acquisition opportunities in the Loess Hills through the National Scenic Byway Program and other funding sources: Partner - Federal Highway Administration

Capacity Support

Goal: Work with local communities and organizations to plan, develop and market resources, facilities and amenities

Strategy A. Provide coordination support to the Loess Hills Missouri River Region Parks to People initiative for Harrison, Pottawattamie and Mills counties