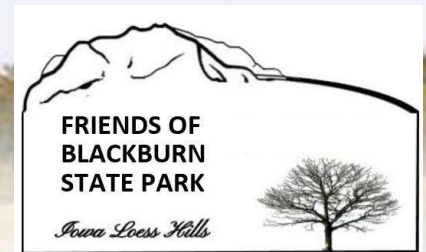


# The Friends' Flyer

## An Update from the Friends of Blackburn State Park



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This is the first edition of the *Friends' Flyer*, a newsletter update from the Friends of Blackburn State Park (BSP). Additional updates will be distributed every quarter or so. The Friends is an Iowa nonprofit 501c3 tax-exempt corporation that includes a board of directors and over 50 members like you who are dedicated to promoting and supporting the park and surrounding wildlife management areas. The park, which is maintained by personnel from Waubonsie State Park, is Iowa's newest state park, located in the Loess Hills at 1291 Cemetery Road northeast of Thurman, Iowa, a few miles north of the town's cemetery.

If you want to know more about the Friends of Blackburn State Park, contact vice presidents Ken Forney (712.313.0315, [reforney@hotmail.com](mailto:reforney@hotmail.com)) or Mike Younts (402.209.7292, [myounts@fmtabor.org](mailto:myounts@fmtabor.org)). Being a Friend of the Park is a good way to stay informed of unique opportunities and activities being offered there.

Here's the latest:

### **1. Website, Drone Video**

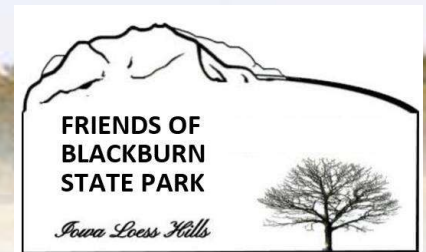
The Friends retained Golden Hills R, C & D to produce an engaging new website for the park. See [Blackburn State Park - GOLDEN HILLS RC&D \(goldenhillsrcd.org\)](http://goldenhillsrcd.org) The site includes an overview, maps, history, a listing of the plants and animals found at the location, and information on the formation of the Loess Hills and on volunteering and donations. (Yes, donations are welcome!) The website also features a nice gallery of photos and, at the end, an impressive drone video of the place kindly gifted to us by Piercing Sight Drone LLC of Thurman, IA, (712-581-3030, [PiercingSightDrone@outlook.com](mailto:PiercingSightDrone@outlook.com)).

### **2. New Year's Hike**

Matt Moles, the facility manager at Waubonsie who also manages Blackburn State Park, announced that because of the surge in Covid cases, the popular annual New Years *First Hike* will not be hosted by park guides at either Waubonsie or Blackburn State Park this year. Nevertheless, he is encouraging all to go to the parks and explore the trails themselves. Trails maps for BSP are provided on the new website. The trail head for the longer Bobcate Trail begins at the sign southeast of the gazebo/pavillion. The shorter Paradise Valley Trail starts just north of the restroom. Kick off the new year with a brisk walk among the beautiful trees in the crisp fresh air. The park will be open all day, from 8 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.

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### **3. Access Road Petition**

Most of you generously offered your support on the petition asking for Fremont County to meet with the parks managers from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to work out short- and long-term plans for the short county access road to the park. Currently two 50-foot ravines are cutting into the road bed of Cemetery Road, the only access road now leading to the park. But it seems the news of the circulating petition may have already prompted some positive response. With the help of DNR upper management, the county engineer has finally agreed to sit down to discuss the matter with the park people. As long as reasonable progress is shown, we will hold in abeyance the petition and planned meeting to present it to the county supervisors. In short, the petition will remain alive but in our back pocket for now as we watch closely and hope for the best.

### **4. Observation Deck Repair, Other Projects**

The Board of Directors of the Friends group identified 11 projects so far. They include the following topics:

- (1) Blackburn State Park Supplemental Website (done)
- (2) Friends Bank Account (done)
- (3) Park Signs
- (4) Honeysuckle Eradication
- (5) Display Signage for Old Homestead and Dugouts
- (6) Hills & Heritage Music Festival, Chicken Fry and ATV Charity Ride (*May become a Friends thank-you meeting??*)
- (7) Friends Membership Drive
- (8) Safe Access Road
- (9) Use of Friends' Equipment by Others
- (10) Gazebo/Pavillion Repair & Maintenance
- (11) Miscellaneous Park Repair & Maintenance

The board hopes to gather feedback from you members about these and other projects over the months to come.

Project no. 10, above, more specifically focused on the observation deck, has been identified by park manager Matt Moles as a priority, hopefully for this spring. Once Matt identifies what needs to be done and prepares the bill of materials and cost estimate for the repair, the Friends will seek funding. Matt will then identify interested and properly skilled volunteers to help with this project. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Matt directly at [matt.moles@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:matt.moles@dnr.iowa.gov), 712.310.3460.