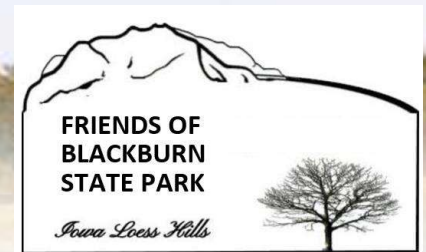


The Friends' Flyer

An Update from the Friends of Blackburn State Park

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This is the latest edition of the *Friends' Flyer*, a newsletter update from the Friends of Blackburn State Park (BSP). 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. The Blackburn Wildlife Management Area next to the park, is managed by Department Natural Resources personnel at the Nishnabotna Wildlife Unit. Altogether, the park, the WMA and other adjacent WMAs offer nearly 1000 acres of publicly accessible DNR grounds at that location. See [Blackburn State Park - GOLDEN HILLS RC&D \(goldenhillsrcd.org\)](http://goldenhillsrcd.org)

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

Tax-exempt donations to the Friends group to support initiatives like those mentioned below can be made by going to the Donations page of the website [Blackburn State Park - GOLDEN HILLS RC&D \(goldenhillsrcd.org\)](http://goldenhillsrcd.org).

Here's the latest park news:

1. Controlled Burn

Sometime over the next few weeks, the Department Natural Resources personnel at the Nishnabotna Wildlife Unit will be conducting a "controlled" or "prescribed" burn of the timberland directly east of the park gazebo/pavilion as well as of the grounds on the Green Hollow Wildlife Management Area directly south of those woods. The exact date of the burn will be decided upon short notice since it is dependent on appropriate wind and humidity conditions. Those Friends with flexible hours who are interested in participating should contact Matt Dollison of the Wildlife Unit at 712.350.0147, matt.dollison@dnr.iowa.gov. Be sure to mention to him if you have taken a reputable training course in controlled/prescribed burns of prairie and woodlands. Prescribed burns of other parts of the park will be undertaken in future years. These burns help set back harmful invasive plants and unwanted woody plants, enrich the soil, and in other ways improve the health of our timberlands and prairies.

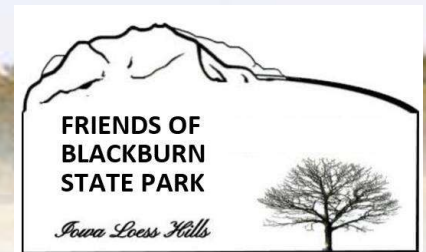


2. Student Earth Day Event

Mike Younts, biology teacher at Fremont-Mills High School and Friends vice president, is planning a nature tour and talk and campfire cookout at the park for his biology classes for April 27. Those willing to help with that event should contact Mike at 402.209.7292, myounts@fmtabor.org. If another date that week is more convenient for those of you who would like to volunteer, he will consider rescheduling the event to accommodate you.

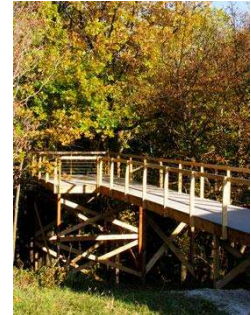
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3. Observation Deck Repair & Upgrade

The Friends has submitted a grant application to the Gilchrist Foundation for the repair and upgrade of the popular handicapped-accessible observation walkway and deck adjacent to the park's gazebo/pavilion. If the application is accepted, the funding should be available this summer. Detailed engineering drawings for the work are being prepared by an engineer commissioned by the DNR. The repair work will be done by park personnel and volunteers under the direction of park manager, Matt Moles. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Matt directly at matt.moles@dnr.iowa.gov, 712.310.3460.



4. Access Road Petition

Discussions between DNR management and the Fremont County Engineer have apparently been fruitful. The county has commissioned engineering firm HGM to design repairs for the two 50-foot ravines cutting into the road bed of Cemetery Road, the only access road now leading to the park. Temporary concrete barriers have been placed around the washouts and some earthwork has been done nearby to help reduce the risk of further washout. After the design is completed over the next few months, a cost estimate will be prepared and included in a budget proposal. It is hoped that the new federal infrastructure funding, which will be coming down to the county, can be applied to this safety project. Unfortunately, it is not expected that the administrative prework can be completed and the serious remedial work begun until next year, assuming the road doesn't collapse this year, posing an emergency situation. The Friends group is working with the Golden Hills RC&D, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and others to explore opportunities for matching funds needed by the county for more gravel for that Class B portion of Cemetery Road.



5. Prairie Conference Presentation

Bill Blackburn will be making a presentation on how the park was developed at a June 3 session of the annual Loess Hills Prairie Seminar in Onawa, IA. See a copy of this slides at: [***From Private Rec Area to State Park: How We Did It.***](#) The popular seminar, which has been held annually for 45 years (except Covid years), will be held June 3-5. It will feature other talks, childrens entertainment, hills hikes, campfires, and great food and conversation. Those interested in attending should see the seminar website at [Home | Loess Hills Prairie Seminar Monona County Conservation](#).