



# A Heartfelt Farewell

MICHELLE WODTKE FRANKS

April 8th is my last day of an eight-year run as executive director at Golden Hills RC&D. I always try to honor promises and I promised our team that I would try to write a proper farewell to our friends, partners, and champions. I've rewritten this about a dozen times, but I am giving myself the grace that I will never capture all the things I could or should say about my time with the organization.

When I started, the staff and board told me that Golden Hills was a family. And I know that might sound cliché, but the people that help advance the mission at Golden Hills are truly my family. We've wrapped around each other for weddings, babies, hairy cryptids, heartbreaking loss, hard won grants, ephemeral blooms in the prairie, a pandemic, and local artists transforming our small towns. I will miss my co-workers the most, but I'm also confident that the work will continue in new and exciting ways with the foundation we have built together.

My family has inhabited the Loess Hills since the mid-1800's – so even though I won't be working directly on behalf of our glorious rural west coast, it is so deeply ingrained in who I am, that my heart will always reside in its protection and celebration. It has been a tremendous honor to highlight these hills through our programming and welcome a new generation to love them as much as I do.

I will be joining the Iowa West Foundation team on April 18th and, in that role, will be carrying along all the things that have shaped my experience at Golden Hills. To everyone that I have had the good fortune to partner with over the years – thank you. You have enriched my life more than you know. Keep collaborating, strive for balance in all things, and cherish the immense natural and cultural riches we have in rural western Iowa.

*Michelle*

**WE'LL MISS YOU,  
MICHELLE!**



## Newsletter Highlights

A HEARTFELT  
FAREWELL

WATERSHED UPDATE

LAST-CHANCE  
LOESS HILLS MERCH

NATIVE SEED PROJECTS

UPCOMING EVENTS



# Watershed Updates

CARA MARKER-MORGAN

The East and West Nishnabotna River Watershed Management Coalitions were formed in 2017 as a part of a larger state-wide project entitled the Iowa Watershed Approach (IWA). Through this program two sister but separate watershed coalitions formed; The East and the West Nishnabotna River Watershed Management Authorities (WMA). The East Nishnabotna WMA has 21 members; 7 SWCD Directors form each of the 7 member counties, 8 County Supervisors representing each of the 8 member counties, and 9 Cities and represents 489,500 acres. The West Nishnabotna WMA has 24 members 8 SWCD Directors form each of the 7 member counties, 8 County Supervisors representing each of the 8 member counties, and 8 Cities and represents 696,400 acres.

After formation, the coalitions set off to put together a watershed plan for each with the assistance of the watershed coordinator Cara Morgan and JEO Consulting Group. These plans were put together with significant input from local stakeholders and landowners in the area. The intent of this watershed plan was to include shovel ready projects and programs to have a plan with projects able to immediately be implemented and not simply have a plan to sit on the shelf.



The Nishnabotna Watershed Management and Flood Resiliency Plan won the American Planning Association - Iowa Chapter 2019 Environmental Planning Award and has had a significant impact on project implementation within the watersheds. The watershed plan will be a guide for the direction of the WMA.

The IWA also provided funding to assist with the implementation of both private and public projects that reduce flooding and improve water quality. One public project and 17 private landowners have participated in the program, implementing practices such as bank stabilizations, ponds, prairie strips, grade stabilizations, tens of thousands of linear feet of terraces, and one of the first bioreactors in southwest Iowa in over a decade!

The East and West Nishnabotna River Watershed Management Authorities are 2 of the 27 WMAs within Iowa making a difference at a larger watershed level on both water quality and flood resiliency.

## Last-Chance Loess Hills Merchandise

Golden Hills has teamed up with a few creative minds to bring you the Loess Hills merchandise you didn't know you were missing! Raygun specially created the WanderLoess bison shirt for us. We are getting to the tail end of our inventory and will be looking at a new design - so if you want one of these shirts you better act fast! Visit [www.goldenhillsrca.org/shirts](http://www.goldenhillsrca.org/shirts) for more info! Limited sizes available.



Another partnership last year was with Bozz Prints of Des Moines, who created these awesome stickers and prints in a variety of sizes. It is hard to capture the depth, expanse, and color range of the Loess Hills but we think this design is an awesome depiction! You can order these limited edition prints on our website at [www.goldenhillsrca.org/bozz](http://www.goldenhillsrca.org/bozz)



**WanderLoess Shirt**



Support conservation in the Loess Hills & western Iowa by purchasing a WanderLoess bison shirt, created in Iowa by Raygun




**\$25 - includes shipping**  
**Order now at [goldenhillsrca.org/shirts](http://goldenhillsrca.org/shirts)**







# Native Seed Projects

LANCE BRISBOIS

Through our award-winning partnership with Iowa Western Community College, we are starting several species of native prairie & savanna plants in their on-campus greenhouse. The plants are started from seed we harvested with help from dozens of volunteers during our Native Seed Harvest events in 2021. We will have a native plant sale later this spring (likely late May or early June), so stay tuned.



We recently partnered with Center for Rural Affairs on a virtual Mini Native Seed School about seed saving and stewardship. Recordings and resources from the Seed School are available on our website at [www.goldenhillsrca.org/seedschool](http://www.goldenhillsrca.org/seedschool).

Based on the success of our virtual plant identification and botany series with Dr. Tom Rosburg last winter (recordings available at the website below), we hosted eight more classes between February and April 2022. If you missed the live classes, they were recorded and are also available for viewing on our website at [www.goldenhillsrca.org/plantid](http://www.goldenhillsrca.org/plantid).

PHOTOS BY LANCE BRISBOIS

## Upcoming Events

find details about all upcoming events at [goldenhillsrca.org/events](http://goldenhillsrca.org/events)



### 2022 LoHi Trek

Together with Kelly Madigan, Golden Hills is organizing the 2022 LoHi Trek in Monona and Harrison Counties on Memorial Day Weekend. To learn more or register for the limited spots available for this event, [check out www.visitloesshills.org/lohi](http://www.visitloesshills.org/lohi)

### Loess Hills Prairie Seminar

We'll be at the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar presenting about our prairie projects the weekend of June 3-5 in Monona County. Project Coordinator Lance Brisbois will lead a bicycle ride through the area on the morning of Sunday, June 5.



### Southwest Iowa Art Tour

Mark your calendars now for the 9th Annual Southwest Iowa Art Tour, September 16th, 17th and 18th, 2022. If you would like information on how to become a participating artist or Gathering Place, please contact Becca at [rebecca.castle@goldenhillsrca.org](mailto:rebecca.castle@goldenhillsrca.org).

**Updated Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9 AM to 4 PM**  
**Staff Listing and emails at: [www.goldenhillsrca.org](http://www.goldenhillsrca.org)**