



# THE LAND USE BULLETIN

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## Storm Lake Residents Cooperate to Solve Water, Land-Use Problem

This summer, as RAGBRAI rolled through northwest Iowa, Storm Lake suffered a water shortage that made headlines across the state. Old pump filters suddenly had given up the ghost. Water was completely off for one day. A short-term fix had the city back to normal in just a few days, but clearly, a long-term solution was needed.

Two employers—Iowa Beef Processors and BilMar—account for about 70% of the water usage in Storm Lake. They also account for a significant percentage of the jobs. Almost one-fourth of the county's workforce is employed at IBP and Bil-Mar. So, from the perspective of both residents and business, an adequate supply of clean water is essential.

In September, our office received a call from Pat Cone, who lives with her family on a farm just outside Storm Lake. Pat had recently retired in order to care for her husband, leaving management of the farm to her three children.

Storm Lake's water problem became Pat's problem when the City threatened to condemn her land to site a new well. The well would have been an unsightly structure located very close to the Cone's home and would have disrupted the family's farming operation.

Pat asked for our help. Now, when a call comes to our office from somewhere in Iowa that a land-use issue is keeping folks awake at night, we usually drop everything and listen. More than anything, helping the proverbial little guy is what 1000 Friends is all about. If we think we can make a difference, we often travel to the site of the problem, listen to both sides and do our best to help. We call

this citizen empowerment, and 1000 Friends has helped over 85 groups and individuals in 45 Iowa counties.

We wish all sticky land-use conflicts could be resolved as easily as Storm Lake's water problem. Largely because Pat took our advice, called everyone she knew and arranged some excellent meetings, we were able to help residents and the City reach an amicable agreement in just one day. All of Pat's neighbors voiced their opposition to condemning her farmland. Another local farmer who didn't mind selling came forward and offered his land for a well. City Manager, John Call, expressed Storm Lake's interest in working with a willing seller, even if it meant additional costs.

It was a comparatively quick and simple resolution to an issue that had plagued Pat and her family for months. We wish all local land-use problems could be solved so easily. Perhaps if better planning and communication became the norm and not the exception, our office wouldn't get quite so many calls for assistance. And that wouldn't be such a bad thing!

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The mission of 1000 Friends of Iowa is to educate the citizens of our state about the long-term benefits of halting urban sprawl, conserving and protecting our agricultural and natural resources, and revitalizing our cities and towns.

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## The Big Picture

### Planning To Reach Our Full Potential

by LaVon Griffieon



**T**he land-use legislation Iowa is 20 years overdue to receive couldn't make it past the House leadership to get onto the floor for debate last session. So I've been busy, one afternoon a month since May, with a diverse group of five lawmakers and designees from 25 public groups trying to iron some of the perceived wrinkles out of the legislation.

Reading a bill, line by boring line, is not my idea of a fun afternoon. But the Interim Planning Bill Work Group's goal is to reach consensus on proposed improvements to the bill. Of course, participants bring their own biases against and hopes for the bill to the table. No one in the room is vehemently opposed to the bill; we all feel planned growth is important. Yet, like good representatives, we welcome compromise as long as we don't have to give anything up!

As I travel across Iowa I often hear land-use planning legislation isn't needed at the state level because land-use regulation is a local concern. Some colleagues on the Interim Planning Bill Work Group have stated that legislation is needed at the state level, but cities and counties can't have it mandated. Counties and cities must not be required to plan. We need to allow them to do this voluntarily.

"Pragmatic" is probably a good word to describe me. "Impatient" may be another. Needless to say, these meetings are taxing my good nature. I have a tendency to compare many of life's situations to parenting. If I had to recommend something for this group it might be Toughlove. *TOUGHLOVE®* International is the self-help organization empowering parents and young people to accept responsibility for their actions.

I hear plenty about cities and counties across the state not being able to "afford" planning. No one mentions the costs that poor planning or the failure to plan have on a community. No one speaks about the ill effects that a community's poor-planning decisions have on its neighbors. It's said that cities and counties want a voluntary system and no mandates. That system is exactly what exists in Iowa now. It is called zoning and comprehensive planning. Here are the facts:

- Seventy-one of Iowa's 99 counties have zoning and comprehensive plans.
- Twenty counties have no zoning.
- Seven counties have zoning but no comprehensive plan.
- Two counties have partial zoning.
- 610 of Iowa's 950 cities have no comprehensive plan.
- Many cities and counties allow so many variances to their comprehensive plans as to render them meaningless.

(See *Planning* continued on page 7)

# Land Use Southern Style

## 1000 Friends of Iowa Annual Meeting

10:00-3:00 Saturday, January 18, 2003  
Hotel Pattee, 1112 Willis Ave., Perry



featuring

### Sam Edwards

Sam will talk about the good, the bad and the ugly of Tennessee's growth legislation. Iowa's proposed Land Management Planning Act is modeled after Tennessee's 1998 bill.

Iowa-grown lunch

### Tour of the restored Hotel Pattee

Why was Tennessee's law conceived? How did it pass? What did it require? What have been its successes and shortcomings? Sam Edwards is well versed in PC 1101, Tennessee's comprehensive growth policy. Since its passage, Tennessee has adopted two additional pieces of legislation to help cities and counties: transfer of development rights and planning commission training.

Perry's Hotel Pattee is a fine example of what renovation can accomplish. It is situated on the main boulevard of a bustling railroad town in central Iowa. When it originally opened to rave reviews in 1913, it was hailed for its fireproof construction and for the modern convenience of a "telephone in every room." We will meet in the Canisteo Room, which commemorates one of the excellent soils that make Iowa the home of some of the most fertile land in the world. This soil is found in the area around Perry. For more information about the hotel and a map, see [www.hotelpattee.com](http://www.hotelpattee.com).

***Yes, I will attend the annual meeting on  
January 18.***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **Cost—\$20**

Registration fee includes the full day of events plus the Iowa-grown lunch.

**Register  
Today**

#### **Questions?**

Call us at  
(515) 288-5364 or  
email us at  
[kfoi@kfoi.org](mailto:kfoi@kfoi.org).

Please make your check payable to 1000 Friends of Iowa and mail it and this form to 3524 6th Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50313 by January 13. ***See you in Perry!***



# Page County Farmers Fight To Save Their Homes and Land

by Ed Fallon

But a watershed study done by the Iowa DNR shows that a dam on the West Tarkio near the little town of Essex would, indeed, allow for a lake suitable for fishing, recreation and potable water. There's only one thing in the way: 31 farm families.

One of those families is the Lundgrens. Cheryl and Don Lundgren have farmed their land along the West Tarkio for 23 years. They are the second generation to work these fields, farming corn and beans on land that has a corn suitability rating of 70 (anything above 60 is considered prime). The Lundgrens have many good years of farming left in their bones and would like to give their two children the option to continue farming the land. Their son, Neil, joined the farming operation just this year.

But if the forces clamoring for a lake get their way, the Lundgrens' home and way of life may be submerged beneath several feet of murky Iowa water. Twelve other homes and three registered century farms would also be destroyed. Led by Shenandoah Mayor, Gregg Connell, efforts to secure funding for the lake advanced far enough this fall that the Lundgrens and their neighbors began to seriously worry about their fate and future.



Christy Walker, Brian Walker, Don Lundgren and Cheryl Lundgren in front of the Walker home.

"They're going to make a lake out of THAT?" I asked, as I stared at the trickle of ankle-deep water known as West Tarkio Creek. Granted, Page County and all of southwest Iowa was experiencing drought conditions. But it was still hard to imagine that such a small stream would ever hold enough water to form a seven-mile lake.

They still worry. But as I've discovered in nearly every corner of Iowa, there's nothing like a threat to the home place to turn even quiet, reserved individuals into a united front of determined activists.

Working with her neighbors, Cheryl helped form Citizens for Responsible Choices (CRC). With the focus and intensity that CRC has brought to the battle over the West Tarkio, people once considered mere collateral damage in the path of the

proposed lake have become an articulate, well-organized force to be reckoned with.



The notorious parade float that got the boot.

CRC organized a petition drive that so far has collected nearly 900 names opposing the lake. Members are regular fixtures at meetings of the county board of supervisors as well as city council meetings in both Shenandoah and Clarinda. They write letters to the editor of the local papers. They even took out several ads in the Weekly Times.

One of CRC's more creative ventures was to enter a float in the local parade. The float sported a banner reading "United We Stand," proclaiming residents' unified opposition to the lake. Nearly everyone was shocked and outraged when parade organizers refused to allow the CRC float in the parade. The editor of the Shenandoah Valley News, in fact, wrote,

*Continued on page 5*



"The idea of kicking the Citizens For Responsible Choices out of the parade after they were accepted was a black eye on the whole city of Shenandoah, regardless of whose decision it was."

CRC has also done its homework, compiling research questioning many of the basic assumptions of the lake's supporters. For example, proponents claim the lake is needed for drinking water. Yet CRC's research shows that less expensive options are available. An engineering report done for the City of Shenandoah last year by Snyder and Associates showed that it would cost \$343,000 to construct three new wells and rehabilitate nine existing wells. Residents' water bills would increase to \$3.27 per 1,000 gallons of water using

For more information about the efforts of Citizens for Responsible Choices, contact Cheryl Lundgren at (712) 379-3213 or [cheryllund@heartland.net](mailto:cheryllund@heartland.net).

new wells, as opposed to \$6.18 if a new lake were built as a new water source.

Though Cheryl and her neighbors can think of a million things they'd rather be doing, they plan to continue to resist efforts to destroy their homes, farms and dreams. "It's hard to understand why we are expected to sacrifice our homes and land for 'the greater good' (a favorite quote of the Mayor's)," says Cheryl. "It

just doesn't make sense for them to ruin 4,750 acres of prime farmland forever for a recreational lake, in the hope that it might draw new businesses to the area. They seem to forget that we are already established businesses, who support Shenandoah and Page County, both with our tax dollars and with the money we spend to sustain our families and farms."

Cheryl and her neighbors have appreciated the input from 1000 Friends of Iowa. She says, "1000 Friends has been a great help, guiding us along the way, giving us a lot of good ideas and providing us with contacts and connections. The experience they've had helping others across the state has paid off for us."

The next battle may be before the Vision Iowa board. Mayor Connell is looking for a Vision Iowa grant of \$15 million to help pay for the lake. Lake opponents see two problems with this. First, Mayor Connell is on the Vision Iowa board. Second, many question whether Vision Iowa money was ever intended to be used in conjunction with condemnation of farmland.



Brian, Cheryl and Don standing in front of the West Tarkio Creek.

## Cell Tower Victory in Fremont County

Jim Baylor, the lone 1000 Friends member in Fremont County, scored a victory regarding the placement of cell phone towers. The County Board of Supervisors wanted to build a very large tower. Jim argued that big towers had been shown to be bad news for migrating birds. He suggested smaller towers, which would not only protect the birds, but would provide potential income to more landowners, since smaller towers would mean more options.

Jim proposed that the County Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution establishing guidelines for the siting of cell towers, but the Supervisors weren't willing to do this. Nonetheless, the proposed big tower was scaled back to a smaller, more bird-friendly tower. To date, it is the only cell tower in Fremont County. Jim and his wife, Leeper, feel that the best course of action would be for the state of Iowa to establish some type of siting parameters, as has been done in other states (New York, for example).



## Recent Studies Support Smart Growth

### Two farm acres lost per minute

The United States is losing two acres of mostly prime farmland every minute to development, the fastest such decline in the country's history, a new study has found. That loss has been on the edge of the outer suburbs, where some of the country's best fruit farms are being replaced by houses on large lots, linked by new roads, highways and malls, the study by the American Farmland Trust said.

*Farming on the Edge: Sprawling Development Threatens America's Best Farmland* reports that between 1992 and 1997, the U.S. paved over more than 6 million acres of farmland, an area approximately equal to the size of Maryland.

The study finds that Americans' wasteful use of land rather than economic growth is causing the problem. The study found that more than half of the lost farmland is being carved into 10-acre lots. "We are consuming more land per person than at any time, in the most wasteful way," said Ralph Grossi, president of the trust, a nonprofit organization. The National Association of Homebuilders supported that conclusion. "We completely agree that 10-acre lots are an inappropriate use of land," said Clayton Traylor, senior vice president of the association. "We both want higher-density development and smart growth."

The problem has been worsening for two decades. While the nation's population grew 17 percent from 1982 to 1997, the amount of land turned into urban areas increased 47 percent.

*For more information about this report, go to [www.farmland.orgfarmingontheedge/index.htm](http://www.farmland.orgfarmingontheedge/index.htm)*

### Land preservation has overwhelming economic benefits

A group of scientists and economists have calculated that forests, wetlands and other natural ecosystems are worth far more to human economies than the same land developed. The study, published in the August 9 edition of *Science*, found that every

year, conversion of wildlands via logging, farming, or development costs the world economy a whopping \$250 billion. It would cost approximately \$45 billion to protect threatened areas of temperate and tropical forest, mangrove swamps, coral reefs, etc., but the return over time in goods and services would amount to at least \$4.4 trillion—a nearly 100:1 benefit-cost ratio. "The economics are absolutely stark. We thought the numbers would favor conservation, but not by that much," said co-author Andrew Balmford of Cambridge University. David Constanza of the University of Vermont added: "We've been cooking the books for a long time by leaving out the worth of nature. Economics has traditionally focused on the market. But we have been finding that a lot of what is valuable to humans takes place outside of the market."

*To read the full news story, go to [www.guardian.co.uk/worldsummit2002/story/0,12264,771528,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldsummit2002/story/0,12264,771528,00.html)*

### Urban sprawl hurts minorities

Most people think of urban sprawl in terms of its physical consequences: the loss of green space, the increase in air pollution and traffic congestion. Robert Bullard also views sprawl in terms of its social effects: the increased economic and racial polarization that hurts minorities in education, employment and housing.

Bullard is a sociology professor and director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University. He asserts the reason why many people left the cities is the quality of schools. "If you equalize school funding and the quality of schools, you will start to have a revitalization of cities that is sustainable," he says.

He points to the lack of public transportation in the suburbs where job growth is taking place. Outlying areas don't have adequate affordable housing for low-income folks, he adds. "If they don't have transportation and there's no housing, it's a double whammy."

*Excerpted from The Baltimore Sun, 10/3/02*



*Planning continued from page 2.*

Iowa can do better. The Iowa Legislature needs to step up to the plate and pass a bill empowering cities and counties to plan cooperatively. State government, like a good parent, should expect all the rules will be observed; and the state should be available to provide some guidance and help, if needed, so every community can realize its potential.

It's been my observation over the years that families who grow without basic limits, discipline and cooperation, often don't achieve their full potential. The same may be true for cities, counties and the state.

## **Timber Valley Woods**

### **Iowa's first urban forest is 10 years old**

In 1992, a "for sale" sign on a plot of Cedar Rapids woodland roused Bob McNiel and his neighbors to action. They enlisted the help of Mark Ackelson, president of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and Trees Forever to devise a plan to hold on to some natural environment.

Many garage sales later, the group had raised \$44,000 and bought the 3.8 acres on the southwest corner of Glass Road NE and I-380, to save the woods from urban development. The group then donated the land to the city of Cedar Rapids, with the stipulation the land would be maintained in its natural state, without trails or benches.

**Volunteer opportunity:** 1000 Friends is looking for volunteers who enjoy meeting people and speaking with them about land-use issues. These volunteers would represent 1000 Friends at conferences, not to speak at the conferences but to be present at our exhibit, handing out literature and answering questions. If you're interested, please call us at (515) 288-5364 or email [kfoi@kfoi.org](mailto:kfoi@kfoi.org).

## **Give the gift of responsible land use**

If your gift-list includes someone who "has everything" but who cares about preservation of our land, our natural resources, or our historic places, you can give the gift of membership to 1000 Friends of Iowa. Simply complete this form with information about your friend and send it to us, along with your tax-deductible check and your name. We will notify your friend of your gift.

# **MEMBERSHIP**

*We are gearing up to make our name a reality. We now have 887 members and contributors in 71 counties. We hope to have 1,000 \$100 Founding Friends, giving us an annual operating budget of \$100,000—a solid position from which to move forward in our work.*

*If you would like to be a Founding Friend, but can't afford a lump sum contribution of \$100, we have a monthly pledge program for \$8.75 a month. Of course, we gratefully accept annual members at \$20 and up as well.*

**Clip and mail with your tax deductible check, payable to 1000 Friends of Iowa.  
Mail to 1000 Friends of Iowa, 3524 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50313.**

## **MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**

Student/Senior ☐ \$20 Founding Friend ☐ \$100

Individual ☐ \$35 Sustaining Friend ☐ \$1,000  
(or more)

Family ☐ \$45 Other ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Sam Edwards to Speak at Annual Meeting**

**S**am Edwards is the Deputy Executive Director and Legal Counsel for the Greater Nashville Regional Council in Nashville, Tennessee. He is a former transportation planner with the Tennessee Department of Transportation, planning director for the Wilson County/Lebanon Planning Office, and regional planning director for the Greater Nashville Regional Council.

Sam holds degrees from Middle Tennessee State University, the University of Tennessee and the Nashville School of Law. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, the American Bar Association, the Tennessee Bar Association and the Nashville Bar Association.

A coffee cup is never far from his lips, and it is rumored that is how he has endured 16 years of working around the Tennessee General Assembly--at least it is rumored to be coffee.

Sam doesn't have a heavy winter coat. In spite of our assurance of a mild mid-January for his visit to Iowa, our southern guest is planning to bring *all* of his clothes.

