

Red Rock Prairie Trail

Proposed recipient:

Jasper County Conservation
1030 W 2nd St S
Newton, Iowa 50208

Requested amount:

\$1,140,000

Explanation of request:

The 16-mile Red Rock Prairie Trail is planned to link the central Iowa towns of Monroe, Prairie City and Mitchellville. The trail connects directly to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge's entrance road by way of bicycle accommodations across Highway 117's bridge over Highway 163. This proposed project would construct a 7-mile connection of multi-purpose trail to extend the route to Mitchellville, Iowa. Construction work for this project includes concrete trail paving on a former railroad grade beginning at Hwy 117 at the west end of Prairie City and continuing north to County Highway S27 in Mitchellville, Iowa. The larger vision of connecting Saylorville Lake to Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge to Lake Red Rock has been goal of the Rock Island Army Corps of Engineers for over 30 years. The Des Moines River Greenbelt Master Plan, which has existed for decades, refers to this route as "a priority development and one of the essential features of the Greenbelt." There is currently no reasonable way for the vast majority of bicyclists to travel to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. It is dangerous for bicyclist and pedestrians to be on a high-speed primary highway that does not have bicycle accommodation features. The proposed project works towards accommodating these users to the Refuge from within the Des Moines metro area. Moreover, the design of the project will make it an easily accessible way for cyclists of all abilities to enjoy the recreational and educational opportunities of the Refuge. This trail corridor is an important component of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the long-range goal of linking Lake Red Rock and Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge with Saylorville Lake and the Central Iowa Trail System throughout the Des Moines metro area.