



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# State Park News

## Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Iowa DNR receives \$650,000 grant from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust

**Media Contact: Todd Coffelt, DNR State Parks, Preserves and Forests Bureau Chief, (515) 330-9204, [Todd.Coffelt@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Todd.Coffelt@dnr.iowa.gov).**

**DUNDEE, Iowa** -- The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has been awarded \$650,000 from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust to be used at Backbone State Park for infrastructure updating in coordination with the rededication of the park during the centennial celebration year coined, Parks 2020.

"The Helmsley Charitable Trust is excited to expand its funding of conservation efforts to Iowa for this important work focusing on restoring and conserving Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC)-era buildings at Backbone State Park," said Walter Panzirer, a Trustee for the Helmsley Charitable Trust. "The historical significance and natural beauty of Backbone State Park deserves to be preserved and enjoyed by future generations."

As the state parks system celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2020, the overall goals are to commemorate the historical and natural significance of Iowa's parks, while also focusing on the critical role they play in the quality of life now and for the future.

On May 28, 2020, Governor Kim Reynolds will lead the centennial celebration at Backbone State Park, kicking off the celebration, focusing on celebrating the past 100 years and looking toward the next 100.

"Backbone State Park was our first state park and there's no better way to kick off this celebratory year and event than with a refreshed look of our infrastructure," said Todd Coffelt, DNR State Parks, Preserves and Forests Bureau Chief. "Thanks to the amazing generosity of the Helmsley Charitable Trust, they too see and recognize the value of state parks and we are grateful for their gift that will help beautify Backbone for many years to come."

Backbone State Park is considered the flagship park of the Iowa state park system. Dedicated as Iowa's first state park in 1920, early naturalists protected the area because of its diverse flora and unique geological formations, including a high-ridge outcropping known as the "Devil's Backbone," which gives the park its name.

Many structures in Backbone were built during the 1930s by the CCC. These limestone-and-wood structures include a lodge, beach pavilion and boat house, open-air auditorium, several bridges and three picnic shelters. The nostalgic design of these buildings defines the Iowa state park system, and are important draws for visitors.

***About the Helmsley Charitable Trust*** *The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting exceptional efforts in the U.S. and around the world in health and select place-based initiatives. Since beginning active grantmaking in 2008, Helmsley has committed more than \$2.6 billion for a wide range of charitable purposes. Helmsley's Rural Healthcare Program funds innovative projects that use information technologies to connect rural patients to emergency medical care, bring the latest medical therapies to patients in remote areas, and provide state-of-the-art training for rural hospitals and EMS personnel. To date, this program has awarded more than \$416 million to organizations and initiatives in the upper Midwest states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Minnesota, Iowa, and Montana. For more information, visit [www.helmsleytrust.org](http://www.helmsleytrust.org).*